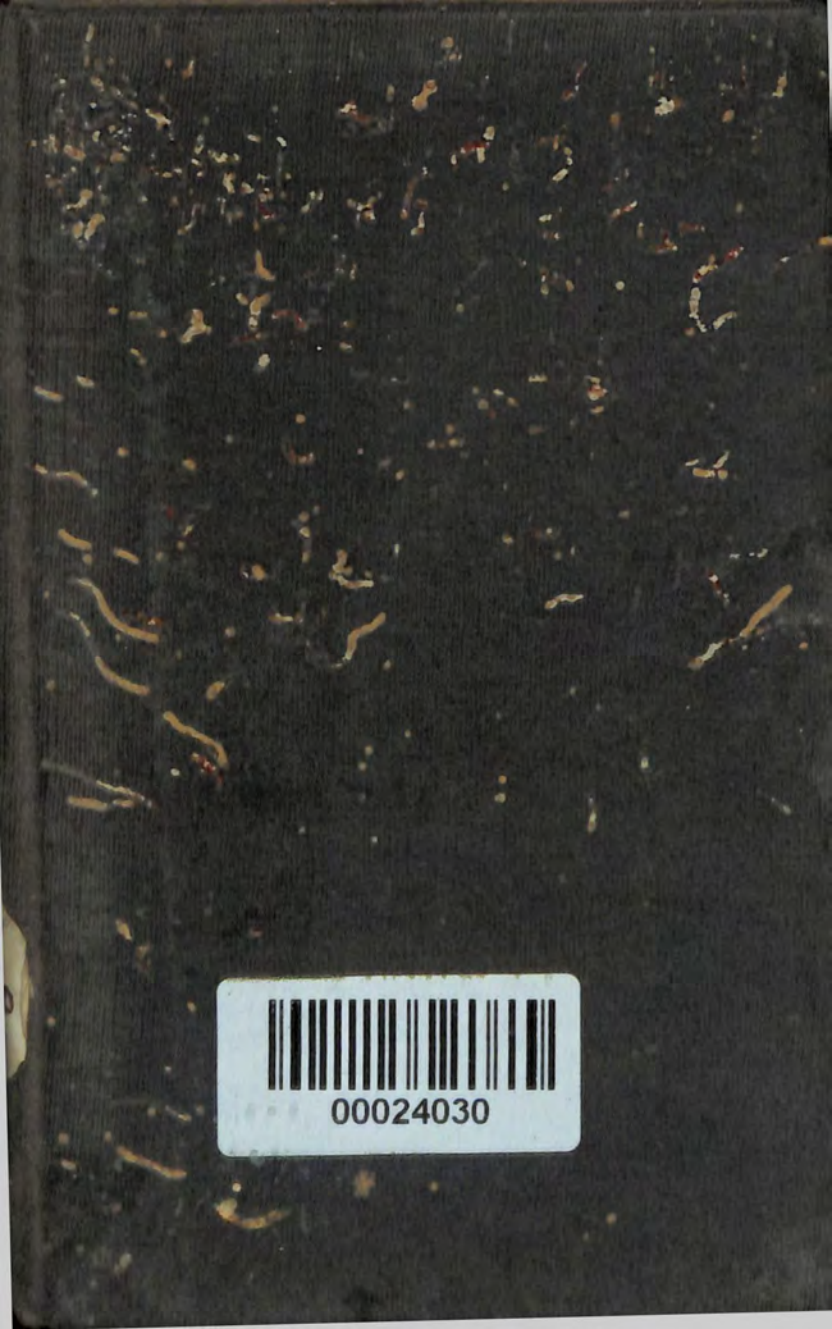

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MEMORIALS

OF

MRS. HEMANS.



Felicia Hemans

MEMORIALS

OF

MRS. HEMANS

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

OF

HER LITERARY CHARACTER

FROM HER

PRIVATE CORRESPONDENCE.

24030

BY

HENRY F. CHORLEY.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON

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HENRY AND CHARLES HEMANS,

THESE

Memorials

ARE AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED

BY

THEIR EDITOR.

ADVERTISEMENT.

In offering these Memorials to the public, I am anxious that their character should not be mistaken—that my work should not be measured by too high a standard. I cannot better guard against such a mischance than by stating the circumstances under which it was planned and executed.

It is now twelve months ago, since I collected and published, in the "Athenæum," a few sketches and remembrances of one whom I had known intimately during the later years of her life. The general interest excited by these papers —or rather by the vivacity and elegance of the letters which they contained—led me to con-

template their extension and republication. While the work was in progress, however, my store of materials was so liberally enriched by the kindness of known and unknown friends, that these Memorials were imperceptibly extended beyond the period of my own personal acquaintance with Mrs. Hemans; and I found myself enabled, by linking together correspondence and anecdote, with slight notices of her published works, to trace out the entire progress of her mind through its several stages. To this task I have exclusively confined myself, purposely refraining from touching upon any such details of the delicate circumstances of her domestic life, as were not necessary to the illustration of her literary career. I have therefore of necessity fallen short of the completeness essential to a regular biography.

It now only remains for me to offer my most cordial and respectful acknowledgments to all who have lent me their assistance;—to say that I have felt even more grateful for the trust reposed

in me by many to whom I am personally a stranger, than for the value and variety of the materials they have graciously placed at my disposal. Those who may read the following pages, will be able to judge of the extent of my two-fold obligation.

London, August 1st, 1836.

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ERRATUM.

Page 25, *for* Ornamental *read* Monumental.

MEMORIALS

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MRS. HEMANS.

CHAPTER I.

Introductory Remarks — Notices of Miss Browne's family, birth, and infancy—Her residence in Wales —Anecdotes of her childhood—Her admiration of military glory—Visit to London—Letter to her Aunt —Notice of her earliest Poems, with extracted specimens.

It was our divine Milton, who, wisely as forcibly, laid down the principle "that he who would not be frustrate of his hope to write well hereafter, in laudable things, ought himself to be a true

poem, that is, a composition of the best and honourablest things." Often as this golden wisdom has been neglected by our poets—often as passion, or frivolity, or—worst of all—a mean love of gain and worldly advancement—have spoiled and silenced the song, and, as it were, quenched the altar-fire of those whose voices would otherwise have been heard long after they were no more, whose light might at once have led and warmed the hearts of future generations—in the many exceptions, no less than the few examples, Milton's precept holds good as a rule. The works of the *really* gifted (passing over those clever mechanists who can affect every form and feeling with equal ease and absence of sincerity) *must*, in some sort, mirror their lives: and he who reads with the mind and not merely with the senses, will find in them the weakness and the strength, the tastes and the antipathies of their writers clearly indicated—the tenor at least, if not the separate incidents, of their history, distinctly set forth.

It is a fascinating and worthy task to follow out the entire subject in its widest range,—to trace not merely the connexion of the poet's utterances with his own fortunes, but to exhibit them as illustrating the progress of his art,—and that art, the destinies of the human race. It is noble to go back to the most dim and ancient times, and to perceive how Poetry has at once been the guide and the harbinger of mankind on its onward march. It is most exciting, while we stand still upon the present, and look around and before us, to speculate upon its future progress and direction; whether we join those bepraisers of the past who can only see evil to come, in their lament that

> . . . . Poesy is on the wane,
> We shall not find her haunts again!

or whether with the more sanguine (perhaps more visionary) race of hopers,* we rejoice

* Elle (La Poësie) ne sera plus lyrique dans le sens où nous prenons ce mot; elle n'a pas assez de jeunesse,

in the hope of its possessing a wider field and being crowned with loftier triumphs than any

de fraicheur, de spontanéïté d'impression pour chanter comme au premier réveil de la pensée humaine. Elle ne sera plus épique ; l'homme a trop vécu, trop réfléchi, pour se laisser amuser, intéresser par les longs récits de l'épopée, et l'expérience a détruit sa foi aux merveilles dont le poëme épique enchantait sa crédulité. Elle ne sera plus dramatique, parceque la scène de la vie réelle a, dans nos temps de liberté et d'action politique, un intérêt plus pressant, plus réel et plus intime que la scène du théâtre ; parceque les classes élevées de la société ne sont pas au théâtre pour être émues, mais pour juger ; parceque la société est devenue critique de naïve qu'elle était. Il n'y a plus de bonne foi dans les plaisirs. . . . La poëzie sera de la raison chantée ; voilà sa destinée pour long temps ; elle sera religieuse, politique, sociale comme les époques que le genre humain va traverser ; elle sera intime surtout, personnelle, méditative et grave ; non plus un jeu d'esprit, un caprice mélodieux de la pensée légère et superficielle, mais l'écho profond, réel, sincère des plus hautes conceptions de l'intelligence, des plus mystérieuses impressions de l'âme. . . . La poësie s'est

it has yet occupied or won—we expect that, inasmuch as universality is becoming a decided feature in the mind of the age, the inspired ones who shall next arise, will be more genially wise, more liberally endowed, than any who have blazed their hour in the world, or mused their hour apart from it, in the past days of conflict and antagonism—we anticipate that in their

dépouillée de plus en plus de sa forme artificielle, elle n'a presque plus de forme qu'elle même. . . . . Mais sera-t-elle morte pour être plus vraie, plus sincère, plus réelle qu'elle ne le fut jamais? Non, sans doute, elle aura plus de vie, plus d'intensité, plus d'action, qu'elle n'en eût encore! . . . . Je ne vois aucun signe de décadence dans l'intelligence humaine, aucun symptôme de lassitude ni de vieillesse ; je vois des institutions vieillies qui s'écroulent, mais des générations rajeunies que le souffle de la vie tourmente et pousse en tous sens, et qui reconstruiront, sur des plans inconnus, cette œuvre infinie que Dieu a donné à faire et à refaire sans cesse à l'homme, sa propre destinée. Dans cette œuvre la poësie a sa place, quoique Pluton la voulût bannir!—*De Lamartine. Destinées de la Poësie.*

works the strongest passion will be displayed, blended with and balanced by the most constraining reverence for what is calm and holy: while, on the other hand, Meditation, as it were, will be drawn down from too long a tarriance on those starry heights whence she loves, alone, to look up to heaven, by the golden cords of a brotherly love which shall embrace the weak and the strong, the ignorant as well as the intellectual. But these are themes which require time and space and experience beyond my powers—though to allude to them may not be considered as altogether impertinent, when it is remembered that in the pages which follow, I am making a contribution to the annals of English Poetry; and to that chapter in particular, which, besides its intrinsic interest, has a significance as illustrating the spirit of the age,—I mean the one which shall treat of the popularity and prevalence of female authorship.

With regard to its popularity, it would, in-

deed, be shameful if,—with the long list we possess of names, excellent in the literature of romance, art, criticism, nay, even in the exact sciences, whose paths it might be thought were too uninviting and arduous to be pursued with steadiness and success by female feet,—the contemptuous party-words formerly wielded in attack and defence were to be heard among us any more. If we are not prepared to admit that genius is of no sex—to hold with some intemperate enthusiasts, who plead their *right* to take up the lion's skin and club, and, assuming the stern and peculiar cares of manhood, would (unwarned by the disastrous example of England's wisest king in the neat-herd's cot) condemn the poor lords of the creation to the small cares of housewifery —we are willing—we are thankful to acknowledge, that in our graver and gayer hours, we have found help-mates, whose services, if not performed by them, must have remained unfulfilled. "If"—to quote one* who wrote eloquently in de-

* Miss Jewsbury.

fence of, and apology for, her own sex—"we still secretly dread and dislike female talent, it is not for the reason generally supposed—because it may tend to obscure our own regal honours; but because it interferes with our implanted and imbibed ideas of domestic life and womanly duty." But this prejudice (let us not inquire whether or not it may have been based upon experience) is fading rapidly away. With the increase of female authorship, a change has taken place in the position of the authors. Our gifted women must feel themselves less alone in the world than was formerly their case; they have therefore daily less and less cause to despise its ordinances—to claim toleration for eccentricity of habits as well as latitude of opinion; and thus they are winning day by day, in addition to the justice of head commanded by their high and varied powers, the justice of heart which is so eminently their due.

On all these grounds, a work which shall trace out the career of a poetess, may not be

altogether uninteresting or unseasonable at the present time. That the subject of the following memorials deserves to rank high among the bright names of English song will not be questioned; and I think that they will be found at once to throw a new light upon, and to harmonize with, the spirit of the writings which the world has so deservedly recognised. It is hardly necessary to say (but I would fain escape the charge of self-complacency) that the value of such a record as mine must lie in its materials, and that the only merit an editor can claim is that of just and modest taste in their arrangement. If I shall be thought to have failed in this, the fault is not one of carelessness, still less of presumption.

Felicia Dorothea Browne—the second daughter and the fourth child of a family of three sons and three daughters,—was born in Duke Street, Liverpool, on the 25th of September, 1794. Her father was a native of Ireland, belonging to a

branch of the Sligo family; her mother, a Miss Wagner, was a descendant of a Venetian house, whose old name, Veniero, had in the course of time been corrupted into this German form. Among its members were numbered three who rose to the dignity of Doge, and one who bore the honourable rank of commander at the battle of Lepanto. In the waning days of the Republic, Miss Browne's grandfather held the humbler situation of Venetian Consul in Liverpool. The maiden name of his wife was Haddock,—a good and ancient one among the yeomanry of Lancashire; three of the issue of this union are still surviving. To these few genealogical notices it may be added, that Felicia Dorothea was the fifth bearing that Christian name in her mother's family,—that her elder sister Eliza, of whom affectionate mention is made in her earliest poems, died of a decline at the age of eighteen; and that her brother Claude, who reached manhood, died in America several years ago. Two brothers older than herself, and one

sister, her junior, are therefore, all that now survive.

Even if, in considering the history of a mind, we are to set aside the supposed influence of the *force du sang* as a popular fallacy, it is still impossible to determine how far and how soon the mere recital of the stately names of her maternal ancestry may have impressed one, so early impressible as the subject of these memorials. Mrs. Hemans would often, half playfully, half proudly, allude to her origin as accounting for the strong tinge of romance which, from nfancy, pervaded every thought, word, and aspiration of her daily life; and for that remarkable instinct towards the beautiful, which rarely forms so prominent a feature in the character of one wholly English born. She was wont to say, that though the years of childhood are for the most part years of happiness, hers were too visionary, too much haunted by impressions and fantasies, not to form an exception to the rule. Had she lived she would

fully have described the sensations of that vague hope mounting almost to ecstasy, and of that fear, more vague, so closely linked with superstition, which often trouble even the infancy of those endowed with a quick, poetic temperament: she would have displayed the unexplained want in their hearts, which is born with such; the sense, which suggests a hidden meaning and a mystery to be fathomed in things which to others appear common and tangible; for she was meditating a work partly imaginative, partly real, to be called "Recollections of a Poet's Childhood," at the time when her labours were bidden to cease for ever.

As a child she was an object almost of devotion, for her extreme beauty; her complexion was remarkably brilliant—her hair long, curling, and golden:—in the latter years of her life its hue deepened into brown, but it remained silken, and profuse, and wavy, to the last. She was one of those, too, who may be said to be born and nurtured in the midst of

prophecies. Who can tell how little or how much impression passing words carelessly spoken may make upon one so sensitive?—One lady incautiously observed, in her hearing, "That child is not made for happiness, I know; her colour comes and goes too fast." She never forgot this remark, and would mention it as having caused her much pain at the time when it was spoken.

Her tastes and dispositions were encouraged by her mother, herself possessed of many endowments and accomplishments;—amongst others, of the delightful talent of reading aloud well. I have been told that she could continue this even as she walked. Mrs. Hemans always spoke, and, it will be seen, *wrote* with enthusiastic affection of her parent: it was to her that her earliest attempts at composition were confided. These, produced at the age of seven years, were of course nothing but repetitions of what she had read and heard—moulded and uttered by that spirit which in very young children only shows its presence by its restlessness. Hannah

More used to play at "riding to London, to talk to bishops and booksellers," Felicia Browne found her chief delight in reciting poems, and fragments of plays. Douglas was in these days a particular favourite with her—and an old nursery looking upon the sea—a large, dimly-lighted room—was the scene of her rehearsals. The excellence of her memory showed itself early—"'Why, Felice, you cannot have read that,' I was wont to say," writes one who overlooked her infancy.—"'O yes! I have, and I will repeat it to you'—and she would do this, almost supernaturally."

The plan of these memorials has precluded the possibility of a close inquiry into the domestic history of these years—and I regret that I cannot enrich my pages with a few anecdotes of her youth, such as I well remember Mrs. Hemans telling, which have now vexatiously escaped from memory. One or two characteristic notices, however, in addition to the above, have collected themselves. From one

lady—who was surprised into tears upon meeting her unexpectedly in society, and contrasting her somewhat faded but expressive features with the girlish beauty she had admired many years before—I have learned that the interest excited by her talents and attractions, when quite a child, was remarkable; not merely in her own family, but likewise among those who, from their sober years and habits, might hardly be expected to sympathize much with the flights and fancies of a young genius, however beautiful. One gentleman who took a kind and efficient interest in the publication of her earliest poems, talked so much and so warmly about her, that his sister used to say—"Brother, you must be in love with that girl!" to which he would answer—"If I were twenty years younger I would marry her!" And a sprightly passage will be found in a subsequent letter, by which it appears that her fascinations included simple as well as gentle—I mean her reference to the old gardener, who used to say

that "Miss Felicia could 'tice him to do whatever she pleased."

When Miss Browne was little more than five years of age, domestic embarrassments, arising from the failure of the mercantile concern in which her father was engaged, led him to remove his family from Liverpool to North Wales. The house in which she passed the greatest part of her childhood, was precisely such an one as from its situation and character would encourage the developement of her poetic fancies. Gr.wych* (now partially ruined) is not far from Abergele in Denbighshire; a solitary, old, and spacious mansion—lying close to the sea shore, and in front shut in by a chain of rocky hills. During Mrs. Hemans' last illness, she reverted again and again to this home of her youth, with that peculiar and minute yearning towards "the days of other years," which so affectingly marks the parting hours of even the stern and the sensual. She would dwell upon the tales of her

* Pronounced Griech.

childhood—would tell of the strange creeping awe, with which the solitude and stillness of Grwych inspired her:—how it bore the reputation of being a haunted house;—and how, on one occasion, having heard a rumour of a fiery greyhound, which kept watch at the end of the avenue, she sallied forth by moonlight, eager, herself, to encounter the goblin. She loved to contrast the fancies born within and around its precincts, with the realities of her after lot; she would say that, though she was never ambitious, could she then have foreseen the fame to which she was destined to rise, the anticipation would have excited a thrill of pleasure, such as the possession had never awakened. She was early a reader of Shakespeare; and, by way of securing shade and freedom from interruption, used to climb an apple tree, and there study his plays; nor had she long made familiar friendship with his "beings of the mind," before she was possessed with the temporary desire—so often born of an intense delight and ap-

preciation—of personifying them. It is remarkable that her fancy led her to prefer the characters of Imogen and Beatrice; nor were her favourites without strong points of resemblance to herself—the one in its airy sentiment tempered with sweet and faithful affection—the other in its brilliant wit redeemed by high-mindedness, from sarcasm or vulgarity—so early were her tastes and personal feelings and mental gifts identified! The sea-shore was her forest of Ardennes: and she loved its loneliness and freedom well: it was a favourite freak of hers, when quite a child, to get up privately, after careful attendants had fancied her safe in bed, and, making her way down to the water-side, to indulge herself with a stolen bath. The sound of the ocean, and the melancholy sights of wreck and ruin, which follow a storm, made an indelible impression upon her mind, and gave their colouring and imagery—

"A sound and a gleam of the moaning sea"

to many of the lyrics, which were written when

she began to trust to her own impulses, and to draw upon her own stores, instead of more timidly resting under the shadow of mighty names.

Those who are born poets, will find food for the desire within them, under the most ungenial circumstances, and in the midst of the harshest trials—just as the real lover of flowers will contrive not to be without a leaf or a bud, wherewith to cheer his eye, though his home be the most airless court in the heart of a vast city. To some, persecution and difficulty are salutary, and their energy must be aroused by resistance. Mrs. Hemans was not one of these. I have often thought that there could be few lots more favourable to the developement of imagination and sentiment, more calculated to excite a thirst for knowledge, than hers, —her own peculiar disposition being taken into the account. Enough was granted to encourage,—enough withheld to quicken aspiration. The unkindness of fortune left her something to wish for; and, to one organized like

herself, must have given an ideal beauty and importance to a thousand objects which, when received as matters of course, lose their charm and authority. And while, on the one hand, the refinements of life were enhanced in value, by restricted circumstances; her mind, on the other,—unvitiated by any experience of the artificial world,—was drinking in high thoughts and glorious images from the books (what treasures are these to the young enthusiast!) which found their way to her retreat, and which she loved and adopted of her own accord, and not in pursuance of any routine. She was never at school, —had she been sent to one, she might probably have run away,—and I am told that the only things she was ever regularly taught were French, English grammar, and the rudiments of Latin, communicated to her by a gentleman, who used to deplore, "that she was not a man to have borne away the highest honours at college!" Occasionally too, she may have been benefited by a passing glimpse of some gifted person. One

hour of such an angel visit does more to unfold and assist the mind at that time of life, when the spirit is almost tumultuously awake, than days, months of intercourse at a period of soberer age and experience. Words are treasured—looks remembered—chance thoughts take root in the heart, teeming with the principle of life; while the very consciousness of being able to appreciate and value the society of those, who give forth their treasures to the young with a freedom and a warmth, which is checked by suspicion in their intercourse with the more sophisticated, has, in itself, a wonder-working spell, under the influence whereof the enthusiast listens, remembers, combines, creates,—and is hurried to that most delicious moment of life, when no difficulties darken the future, and, in the fulness of joy and inexperience, he feels within himself "*Ed anche io son' poeta!*"

But—to follow the digression yet a step further—while such are the peculiar advantages

and pleasures which attend the youth of genius developing itself in seclusion, that condition is subject to other influences to which it may be well,—nay it is a duty for one to advert, who would trace out the poetic character with reference to the high destinies of the art. The same position which is most favourable to the imagination may be unfriendly to the general sympathies. The young recluse, feeling himself apart and alone in the right of his mind—the idol of a small and devoted circle,—is too apt to throw himself exclusively upon peculiar veins of thought; too fastidiously to adhere to such objects alone as are dearest to himself, and thus feebly to prize, if not utterly to fail in gaining, the poet's highest attribute. He looks at the world from a distance, and can only fix his eyes upon those who tower above the common crowd: if he tolerates its murmur, it is for the sake of some fragmentary tones of music which mingle therewith. The rest of its inhabitants are to him "the common herd," —the other sounds, a Babel of folly and discord,

from which he loves to hide himself in the pleasure gardens of his own fancy. And he turns away with a generous, but short-sighted scorn from the small pleasures and small cares of common life; forgetting that, inasmuch as the use of monastic religion and monastic learning has passed away with the feudal days of nobles and villains, it is not only wise for his own spirit, but incumbent upon him as the steward of a noble heritage, to do something besides toiling in this retired fairyland of his own—that he is bound to labour in the wider, though less congenial, fields of human life and affection, which are peopled with the homely as well as the elegant—the weak as well as the strong.

A man cannot far advance on his pilgrimage without his views becoming widened by that actual collision with life which a woman can rarely experience: yet how many a one is there, who, on the plea of the loneliness of genius, has never known the strength and joy of his own spirit, and has passed away like the vapour of the

morning! But for one of the gentler sex, shielded as she is by her position in society—engrossed by affections which colour every object coming within their circle—there is always too great a danger of being too exclusive in her devotions; without to these conditions being added, that of retirement from the world to confirm her in hero-worship solely offered to the great and gifted—to encourage her undue shrinking from all that jars upon her highly-wrought and sensitive feelings.

It would be difficult, were the whole range of our imaginative literature searched through, to discover a more perfect illustration of the above remarks than is to be found in the works of Mrs. Hemans, and in the progress of mind they register. That she did only a partial justice to her powers, must be admitted by all who ever held friendly intercourse with her: they will feel, too, that she was summoned away at the moment when she might, and must have risen higher than she had ever done before.

Her first works are purely classical or purely romantic; their poems may be compared to antique groups of sculpture, or the mailed ornamental figures of the middle ages set in motion. As she advanced on her way, sadly learning the while the grave lessons which time and trial teach, her songs breathed more reality and less of romance; the too exclusive and feverish reverence for high intellectual or imaginative endowment, yielded to a calmness, and a cheerfulness, and a willingness more and more, not merely to speculate upon, but to partake of the "beauty in our daily paths." Had she lived to bring these yet more fully to bear upon the stores of knowledge she had heaped up, she would have produced a work as far superior to any she has left us, as her own latest lyrics and scenes exceed the prize poems of her girlhood:—the first frigid exercises of a timid and trammelled writer.

Miss Browne had not long emerged from infancy, when the circumstance of a near and dear member of her family being engaged

in the Peninsular campaign, wakened some of her strongest individual feelings; her attention being drawn (as was often the case) through the medium of her affections, to the literature and the scenery and the chivalry of Spain, with which her fancy delighted to associate the career and the achievements of those she loved. While she shrunk with more than ordinary feminine timidity from any bodily pain,—refusing even to submit to the trifling suffering of having her ears prepared to admit ear-rings—her mind wrought incessantly upon scenes of heroic enterprise and glory; her cherished images of contemplation were the camp, the hold, the skirmish, and the English flag triumphant over all. One of her favourite ornaments at a later period of life was the cross of the Legion of honour, taken on some Spanish battle-field. Among her best loved poems were Campbell's glorious odes, and she could never repeat those two lines,

> Now joy, old England! raise
> In the triumph of thy might!

without the blood rising into her cheek, and her eye kindling. Yet this engrossing delight in military glory was far different from the common school-girl's love of a red coat; in nothing can I trace that common-place frivolity of temperament upon which the noise of drums beaten, and the flare of streaming colours, act as a stimulus.*

* It is beautiful to remark in many of Mrs. Hemans' poems, the mingling of all that is true, and gentle, and deep in feeling, with all that is most glowing in imagery. Though her muse,—to borrow the expression as striking as true, of one, himself a thorough master of the magnificent,—"*sweeps through even the most flowery paths,*" she wears under all her robes of triumph, the pitying heart of a woman. Thus, how entire is the contrast between these two stanzas of "The Illuminated City"—

I passed through the streets; there were throngs on throngs—
Like sounds of the deep were their mingled songs;
There was music forth from each palace borne—
A peal of the cymbal, the harp, and horn;

She had little taste for mere pageantry. When she visited London as a child, she did not enjoy its crowds and gaiety. In a fragment of a very early letter which is before me, she describes herself as "satiated with opera, park, and play, and longing to get away much more than she ever did to come." This, it is true, *may* not have been wholly natural; for there are many, who, full of youthful enthusiasm, and scrupulously

---

The forests heard it, the mountains rang,
The hamlets woke to its haughty clang:
Rich and victorious was every tone,
Telling the land of her foes o'erthrown.

* * * * * *

Didst thou meet not a mourner for all the slain?
Thousands lie dead on their battle plain!
Gallant and true were the hearts that fell,
Grief in the homes they have left must dwell;
Grief on the aspect of childhood spread,
And bowing the beauty of woman's head:
Didst thou hear, midst the songs, not one tender moan,
For the many brave to their slumbers gone?

delicate in conscience, are ashamed of seeming to take undue pleasure in any thing artificial; but the supposition is, perhaps, unjust. In after life she often described the delight with which the great works of art (particularly of sculpture) had then impressed her. When first led into a gallery of statues, she exclaimed to those who accompanied her, "O hush! don't speak!" These two ruling inspirations of chivalry and art, all but exclusively divided her attention in her earliest works. A poem, called "England and Spain," was translated into Spanish; of another, of which I can find no trace in print, she speaks in the following letter, which contains the germ of the thoughts, habits, and impulses of many a future year.

"Dec. 19th, 1808.

"The severe indisposition from which I have just recovered, has prevented me, my dear aunt, from fulfilling, so early as I could have wished, my promise of writing to you: I have suffered

much pain, and should have continued an invalid much longer, but for the unremitting care and attention of my dear mother: my illness was a fever, entirely occasioned by cold. I can now appreciate the full value of health, and feel my heart glow with gratitude to the good Supreme, who bestows upon me so inestimable a blessing; so true it is, in the words of Shakspeare, 'that what we have we prize not to the worth, *while we possess it.*' I am now quite restored, and my mind has recovered its usual energies. I never felt a more ardent emulation in the pursuit of excellence than at present. Knowledge, virtue, and religion, are the exalted objects of my enthusiastic wishes and fervent prayers, in which I know you will unite with me. . . .

"You have, I know, perused the papers (as I have done,) with *anxiety*, though, perhaps, without the *tremors* which I continually experience. The noble Spaniards! surely, surely, they will be crowned with success: I have never given up the cause, notwithstanding the late

disastrous intelligence; but I think their prospects begin to wear a brighter appearance, and we may hope that the star of freedom, though long obscured by clouds, will again shine with transcendent radiance. You will smile, my dear aunt, but you know not what an *enthusiast* I am in the cause of Castile and liberty: my whole heart and soul are interested for the gallant patriots, and though females are forbidden to interfere in politics, yet as I have a dear, dear brother, at present on the scene of action, I may be allowed to feel some ardour on the occasion.

. . . . . "You see I am writing on the anniversary of George's birthday; and I know you will pray that every year may see his progress in virtue and true heroism. I am proud that he is at present on the theatre of glory; and I hope he will have an opportunity of signalizing his courage, and of proving an honour to his family and an ornament to his profession. I am this very moment wishing that I possessed a small portion of that patience

with which my mother is so eminently gifted, for the paper is not yet arrived, and you may imagine the petulance of your '*little obstreperous niece*.' I have been reading a most delightful French romance, by Madame de Genlis, 'Le Siege de la Rochelle;' you would be in raptures with it. . . . . I think it excels 'Corinne,' which is certainly bestowing a very high eulogium upon any work. Lady Kirkwall paid us a long and highly agreeable visit a few days ago, and brought me these volumes, which I have perused with such enthusiasm: she bestowed great commendation upon 'Valour and Patriotism,' and I hope it will justify her encomiums. I had a letter from Major Cox, dated 16th of November, and from Madrid: he wrote in good spirits, and looked forward to the ultimate success of the Spanish cause. Glorious, glorious Castilians! may victory crown your noble efforts. Excuse me for dwelling so much on this subject; for Spain is the subject of my thoughts and words—'my

dream by night, my vision of the day!' Can you be surprised at my enthusiasm? My head is half turned, but still steady enough to assure you that I remain ever, my dearest aunt,

"Your attached and affectionate

"FELICIA."

I cannot but point to the above letter as a remarkable instance of the growth and refinement of taste which must, as life advances, take place even in the most exquisitely gifted. No one would have smiled more certainly than its writer, had she heard, in later years, "Le Siege de la Rochelle" placed higher than "Corinne." Some of her preferences, however, continued unchanged throughout her life. Froissart, a favourite book of her early days, was never deposed in her esteem by any other chronicler of the chivalrous ages; and in one of her latest sonnets, she has left us a record of the delight she found in that most simple and sweet of all French romances, Paul and Virginia.

O gentle story of the Indian isle!
I loved thee in my lonely childhood well.
On the sea-shore, when day's last purple smile
Slept on the waters, and their hollow swell
And dying cadence lent a deeper spell
Unto thine ocean pictures * * *

Something should now be said of Miss Browne's earliest poems. It would be unfair to test the sincerity and strength of the early strivings of a mind, such as is shown in the foregoing fragments and anecdotes, by the excellence of its first fruits. The very consciousness of being possessed of the poet's gift—(were it even possible in its utterance to dispense with the cultivation of study and meditation)—is at first so bewildering as to hinder genius from aught save a dim and feeble developement: and it is more by watching the tenor of their lives, by observing the tendency of their tastes and antipathies, than by anatomizing productions purely imitative, that the genuine poet is to be singled out from the herd of "clever children." Thus,

in the two volumes published by Miss Browne,—the first bearing the date of 1808, and containing some verses written by her when only nine years of age,—the second, entitled "The Domestic Affections," published in the year 1812,—there is, as might be expected, no individuality discernible, save, perhaps, in the choice of subject, and a singular harmony and finish of numbers: on the other hand, we find in them none of those starts and conceits and extravagances, upon the mistaken strength whereof—a real weakness—not a few audacious young spirits have claimed to be numbered among "the "starry ones,"—a claim never to be confirmed by the efforts of their riper years. Many of the verses in the first-mentioned volume, which is inscribed to Lady Kirkwall, contain those little birthday compliments, addresses to attached relations, and expressions of affection, or regret, in which the young delight to exercise their newly-discovered power. A single specimen will suffice, from the poems of a more purely fanciful character.

FAIRY SONG.

All my life is joy and pleasure,
Sportive as my tuneful measure;
In the rose's cup I dwell,
Balmy sweets perfume my cell;
My food the crimson, luscious cherry,
And the vine's luxurious berry;
The nectar of the dew is mine,
Nectar from the flowers divine.
And when I join the fairy band,
Lightly tripping hand in hand,
By the moonlight's quivering beam,
In concert with the dashing stream;
Then my music leads the dance,
When the gentle fays advance;
And oft thy numbers on the green
Lull to rest the fairy queen.
All my life is joy and pleasure,
Sportive as my airy measure.

This collection of her earliest poems was almost the only one of her works for the sake of which Mrs. Hemans had to taste the gall as well

as the honey of criticism. An unkind review to which they gave occasion, so affected her, as to confine her to her bed for several days. It is possible, however, that its severity, by suggesting to her the necessity of study, and meditation, and unflagging devotion, may have been salutary; for some progress is achieved in the second and smaller volume to which I have referred. Warlike themes diversify the gentler ones to love and duty:—"The Bards to the Soldiers of Caractacus," "The Angel of the Sun," "The Dying Gladiator," and other poems of equally high-sounding title, stand side by side with "The Ruin and its Flowers," "The Mountaineer's Song," and "The Domestic Affections." The imagery of these poems, though in no respect newer than in those of an earlier date, is collected from sources more widely distant: their colouring, too, indicates an increased strength of hand—their versification is cast into a greater variety of metre. But here, too, it would be inexpedient to linger, and wearisome to offer

any very extensive extract. Perhaps the best sustained of these poems is the one entitled "War and Peace," written in the stately heroic measure, and containing allusion and simile and apostrophe according to the most approved forms. But some of the minor pieces are less like a formal exercise, and more closely prophetic of the style in which the poetess was on a future day so signally to excel; and the following verses rise above the average merit of the fugitive poetry of the day.

THE RUIN AND ITS FLOWERS.

Sweets of the wild, that breathe and bloom
On this lone tower, this ivy'd wall;
Lend to the gale a rich perfume,
And grace the ruin in its fall;
Though doom'd, remote from careless eye,
To smile, to flourish, and to die,
In solitude sublime,
Oh! *ever* may the spring renew
Your balmy scent and glowing hue,
To deck the robe of Time!

Breathe fragrance! breathe, enrich the air,
Though wasted on its wing unknown!
Blow flowerets! blow, though vainly fair,
Neglected and alone!
These towers that long withstood the blast,
These mossy towers are mouldering fast,
While Flora's children stay;
To mantle o'er the lonely pile,
To gild destruction with a smile,
And beautify decay!

* * * *

Lorn echo of these mouldering walls,
To thee no festal measure calls;
No music through the desert-halls
Awakes thee to rejoice!
How still thy sleep, as death profound,
As if, within this lonely round,
A step, a note, *a whisper'd sound,*
Had ne'er aroused thy voice!

Thou hear'st the zephyr, murmuring, dying;
Thou hear'st the foliage, waving, sighing;
But ne'er again shall harp, or song,
These dark, deserted courts along,

Disturb thy calm repose;
The harp is broke, the song is fled,
The voice is hush'd, the bard is dead!
And never shall thy tones repeat
Or lofty strain, or carol sweet,
With plaintive close.

* * * *

The foregoing stanzas have been purposely selected at random. I am not aware of much poetry produced at so early an age as their writer's, by the side of which they may not worthily stand. When their author again appeared before the public, her mind had received much and various cultivation; she had then, too, taken, though so young, that most important step in life, which introduced her to the cares, and anxieties, and affections of maternity.

CHAPTER II.

Miss Browne's marriage—Her retirement from the world—Her Translations—Her Prize Poems—Her humorous Poetry—"The Mineralogist"—The "Tales and Historic Scenes"—The "Sceptic"—"Modern Greece"—Intercourse with Bishop Heber—His remarks on a Poem in progress—Notices of the "Vespers of Palermo," with Letters to the Rev. H. H. Milman—The "Welsh Melodies."

In the year 1812, Miss Browne was married to Captain Hemans of the Fourth Regiment. This union may be said to have closed, shortly before the birth of a fifth son, by a protracted separation. "Unfortunately," to use the words of a very slight biographical sketch prefixed to the volume of Poetical Remains recently published,

"Captain Hemans' health had been undermined by the vicissitudes of a military life;—more particularly by the hardships he had endured in the disastrous retreat upon Corunna, and by the fever which proved fatal to many of our troops in the Walcheren expedition. Indeed, to such an extent was this breaking up, as to render it necessary for him, a few years after his marriage, to exchange his native climate for the milder sky of Italy." Mrs. Hemans, whose literary pursuits rendered it advisable for her not to leave England, remained with her family, now removed to Bronwylfa, a pleasant residence in the neighbourhood of St. Asaph.

The memorials permitted to me of this part of Mrs. Hemans' life, though less copious and minute than those which illustrate the period of personal intercourse, are interesting, as consistently illustrating the mind whereof the master impulses and gifts had been indicated in her childish readings of Shakspeare in the apple-tree, her feverish delight in military glory, and

the quick and wayward temperament which made her enjoy the stolen summer evening's bath. The bud, the blossom, and the fruit, underwent no modifications of form and colour, save those of a natural and progressive expansion. That this developement was rapid, may be ascribed to the peculiar circumstances of Mrs. Hemans' position, which, by placing her in a household, as a member and not as its head, excused her from many of those small cares of domestic life, which might have either fretted away her day-dreams, and, by interruption, have made of less avail the search for knowledge to which she bent herself with such eagerness; or, more probably still, might have imparted to her poetry more of masculine health and stamen, at the expense of some of its romance and music. But—in pointing out the influences which gave to her writings their manner, by some thoughtlessly mistaken for monotony—it is a duty also to remark, that Mrs. Hemans' poems, though often deeply melancholy, and dwelling, it may

be, a little too exclusively upon the farewells and regrets of life—upon the finer natures broken in pieces by contact with a mercenary and scornful world,—are never morbid in their tone—never convey a word or thought of questionable morality. It has been truly said, by a contemporary writer of her own sex,* that "she never degraded the poet's art: if she even did not as well as under more fortunate circumstances she might have done, she never published any thing that might not be said to make a necessary part of her poetic reputation:—like a noble building of finely-wrought free-stone, though one stone closely resembles another, all go together to make a magnificent and solid whole. Her sympathies were with our human nature, as exhibited under suffering, or through the affections. I do not remember a single poem in which the incidents were of vice, even

* In a private letter written upon receiving the news of Mrs. Hemans' death.

to work a moral through them;—it was the highest virtue, the most tried and enduring affection, and the yearning of our spiritual nature after a higher and purer communion and existence, that inspired her. Such a series of poems as hers may, to a certain degree, be monotonous; but the soul that dictated them is wonderfully noble, and must be likewise pure."

The desire for knowledge manifested by Mrs. Hemans, from her earliest age, has been already adverted to. She still continued increasingly to enrich her mind with treasure, gathered from the old classic authors, and the more modern writers of Italy and the Peninsula. Of her familiarity with the German language more will be said in its proper place. "The nature and manner of her studies," says her sister, in a letter which has materially aided me in the verification of several dates and incidents, "had at all times, to a common observer, somewhat of a desultory appearance; for she seemed to take in every

thing, as it were, by intuition, and whilst flying from one subject to another, in what might have been thought the most puzzling way possible, each retained in her mind its distinct 'form and pressure,' and there was no fear of its ever being confused or effaced. I do not think I ever saw her with only one book within reach; she was always surrounded by five or six, on every diversity of topic." Her versions from Horace and Camoens, an ode or two translated from Herrera, and some fragments from the Italian poets, remain to attest her familiarity with the several languages in question. Those who are interested in comparative criticism may find amusement in contrasting Mrs. Hemans' versions from Horace, with Miss Seward's Paraphrases, in which the elder poetess complacently labours to give as much Darwinian embroidery as possible to the thoughts of the graceful Roman, and smiles upon her work, when complete, with the air of one who has accomplished notable improvements. Mrs. Hemans' success

in translation, though sufficient to prove her familiarity, not only with the peculiar productions of the writer she undertook to render, but also with the general spirit of his language and time,—is not remarkable. It was during this period, too, that she contributed a series of papers on Foreign Literature to the Edinburgh Magazine; these, with some very few exceptions, being the only prose compositions ever produced by her.

Her two prize poems, "Wallace," and "Dartmoor,"—the latter of which received its honour at the hands of the Royal Society of Literature in the year 1821,—may be also referred to this time of transition; and with them, "The Restoration of the Works of Art to Italy." Though all these poems were more or less successful, an enumeration of them is sufficient; for they must be considered as the exercises, rather than the effusions, of a mind, as distrustful of its own power, as it was filled almost to overflowing. Occasionally, too, she

gave way, in her verse, to her livelier humour—the same which in a freak had absolutely made her set one side of a furze-covered Welsh hill on fire, when abroad on a party of pleasure. None, however, of her "wildnesses" (to borrow her own name for certain whimsical national tunes in which she took great delight) have been published. Many were destroyed as soon as the effervescence of the moment in which they were produced had subsided. The following, however, written in 1816, will be read with interest, as the sole specimen of her early attempts in this style of composition ever given to the public. As she grew older, her fantasies were spoken, not versified.

EPITAPH ON MR. ———,

A CELEBRATED MINERALOGIST.

Stop, passenger, a wondrous tale to list—
Here lies a famous mineralogist!

Famous, indeed,—such traces of his power
He's left from Penmanbach to Penmanmawr,—
Such caves, and chasms, and fissures in the rocks,
His works resemble those of earthquake shocks;
And future ages very much may wonder
What mighty giant rent the hills asunder;
Or whether Lucifer himself had ne'er
Gone with his crew to play at foot-ball there.

His fossils, flints, and spars, of every hue,
With him, good reader, here lie buried too!
Sweet specimens, which, toiling to obtain,
He split huge cliffs, like so much wood, in twain:
We knew, so great the fuss he made about them,
Alive or dead, he ne'er would rest without them;
So, to secure soft slumber to his bones,
We paved his grave with all his favourite stones.

His much-loved hammer's resting by his side,
Each hand contains a shell-fish petrified;
His mouth a piece of pudding-stone incloses,
And at his feet a lump of coal reposes:
Sure he was born beneath some lucky planet,
His very coffin-plate is made of granite!

Weep not, good reader! he is truly blest
Amidst chalcedony and quartz to rest—
Weep not for him! but envied be his doom,
Whose tomb, though small, for all he loved had room:—
And, O ye rocks! schist, gneiss, whate'er ye be,
Ye varied strata, names too hard for me,
Sing "O be joyful!" for your direst foe,
By death's fell hammer is at length laid low.
Ne'er on your spoils again shall ——— riot,
Shut up your cloudy brows, and rest in quiet!
He sleeps—no longer planning hostile actions,—
As cold as any of his petrifactions;
Enshrined in specimens of every hue,
Too tranquil e'en to dream, ye rocks! of you.

The "Tales and Historic Scenes," in which will be found the germ of many of Mrs. Hemans' more perfect and characteristic ballads and lyrics, were published in the year 1819; about the same period appeared "The Sceptic" and "Modern Greece." Though in each of these works something of progressive excellence and

originality is to be traced, they are here dwelt upon only for the sake of an anecdote or two. "The Sceptic," it may be remarked, is the only poem, of a purely didactic character, ever written by Mrs. Hemans. The young are eager to enforce truth by zealous and direct exhortation; those of a mature age are willing to persuade by illustration. But "The Sceptic," though in impressiveness falling far short of the glorious picture of a true faith and a stedfast mind triumphing over torture and death displayed in "The Forest Sanctuary," was not without its effect and authority; it called forth an anonymous tribute of some merit, probably the first of the many communications, some touching, some ridiculous, which she afterwards received,—dooming the latter to instant burial in what she would playfully call her "chaos drawer." During the latter years of her life, too, Mrs. Hemans was visited by a gentleman, who, upon being admitted to her presence, thanked her earnestly for the serious benefit he

had derived from "The Sceptic," to the perusal of which he gratefully referred, as having been greatly instrumental in leading him back from the very verge of infidelity. The poem of "Modern Greece," independently of its intrinsic beauty, possesses interest as having called forth an expression of praise from Lord Byron, which is to be found in one of his letters. Her mind appears about this time to have turned with a fond yearning towards this land of beauty and ruin; and her own lyrics relating to its sorrows and its victories, and to what Bulwer has so happily called its "graceful superstition," may be characterised by the description applied by herself to the epigrams from the minor Greek poets. "They remind me," says she in a letter to a friend—it is a pleasure to name her in association with so accomplished a scholar and so amiable a man as Archdeacon Wrangham—"of the antique vases, with their exquisite tracery of leaves, and flowers, and joyous dancing figures."*

* I cannot resist quoting two verses of one of Mrs.

It will be seen then, that Mrs. Hemans' name was gradually stealing forth into the world as a

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Hemans' later lyrics, as a most happy illustration of the above remark; they are from the poem "And I too in Arcadia," the first idea of which was suggested by a picture by Poussin, representing a pastoral group gazing upon a tomb, bearing that well-known inscription.

"There is many a summer sound
That pale sepulchre round;
Through the shade young birds are dancing,
Insect-wings in sun-streaks glancing;
Glimpses of blue festal skies
Pouring in when soft winds rise;
Violets o'er the turf below,
Shedding out their warmest glow;
Yet a spirit not its own,
O'er the greenwood now is thrown,
Something of an under-note
Through its music seems to float,
Something of a stillness grey
Creeps across the laughing day.
Something, dimly from those old words felt,
'I, too, shepherds! in Arcadia dwelt!'

word of promise. At an earlier period, indeed, the fame of her beauty and extraordinary talents

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" Was some gentle kindred maid
In the grave with dirges laid?
Some fair creature, with the tone
Of whose voice a joy is gone,
Leaving melody and mirth
Poorer on this altered earth?
Is it thus? that so they stand,
Dropping flowers from every hand?
Flowers and lyres, and gathered store,
Of red wild fruit prized no more?
No! from that bright band of morn,
Not one link hath yet been torn;
'Tis the shadow of the tomb
Falling o'er the summer bloom.
O'er the flush of love and life
Passing with a sudden strife;
'Tis the low prophetic breath
Murmuring from the house of death,
Whose faint whisper thus their hearts can melt,
'I too, shepherds! in Arcadia dwelt.'"

Songs of Summer Hours.

had travelled far enough to reach Shelley, who, being at that time filled to restlessness with a conviction of the importance of his daring and unpopular philosophy, addressed to her a series of letters, of which, I believe, there is no trace remaining. But the first literary character of any distinction, with whom she became familiarly acquainted, was Bishop Heber, who at that time passed a part of every year at Bodryddan, near St. Asaph. "She was then, I believe," say the notes to which this portion of my memorials is greatly indebted, "about five-and-twenty years of age, and had already distinguished herself by her 'Restoration,' and her two prize poems. A more valuable friend for her than Bishop Heber, could hardly be found." She confided her literary plans to him, and always spoke with affectionate remembrance of his delightful social qualities, and with a deeper feeling of regard for his piety, as fervent as it was free from moroseness or sectarianism. So, also, she wrote of him,

* * * * *

Hath not thy voice been here amongst us heard?
And that deep soul of gentleness and power,
Have we not felt its breath in every word
Wont from thy lip as Hermon's dew to shower?
Yes! in our hearts thy fervent thoughts have burned,
Of Heaven they were, and thither have returned.

* * * * *

I am enabled to give a proof (from his own hand-writing) of the high estimation in which the author of "Palestine" held, not merely the natural gifts, but the acquired knowledge of the young poetess and her powers of research. The note which accompanies the following interesting hints is not dated; but, from the formality of its address, must be referred to a very early period of their intercourse. The poem, to which the remarks allude, was one in which Mrs. Hemans meant to display the poetry of superstition, to trace out the symbolical meaning, by which the popular faiths of every land are linked together, and which

tend so impressively to their coincidence. Possibly, however, she may have shrunk from the research and illustration recommended to her, as involving too much labour: at all events, the poem was never completed.

* * * * *

"After stanza 7, 'a slow-receding star,' something might be introduced, perhaps, about Astræa, or Righteousness, which the heathen poets described as a celestial virgin, who abode on earth till the commencement of the iron age, and then withdrew to the heavens and the constellation of the Balance. Like her, Religion left the world, and was only to be traced in the grand features of nature, which testified to their Maker's existence and power, &c. &c.

"Perhaps you might also introduce some mention of the Tower of Babel, and Nimrod, its supposed founder, whose impious ambition led to the judicial confusion of tongues and dispersion of the human race. This might introduce stanzas 8 and 9.

"After stanza 12, I would certainly introduce the doubt which naturally arose in the mind of the savage, whether the blended prospects of good and evil in nature, might not arise from the struggle of a good and evil principle. Thus they saw poison opposed to nourishment, deformity to beauty, disease to vigour, death to life, evil to good; and were ready to conclude, that there must be two opposing gods, the authors of such opposite phenomena. Hence as loftier or baser feelings prevailed in the mind, men were led either to address their hopes and thankfulness to the Fountain of Good, or to turn in fear or in malice, to deprecate the severity or invoke the aid of the fountain of mischief. Hence, in all rude countries the sorcerer divides the respect of mankind with the priest. Hence the wizards of Egypt who contended with Moses,—the woman of Endor possessed with a familiar spirit. Hence in Greece the Furies had their sacred groves, which none might enter and live; into one of which Œdipus entered

when an exile, and pursued by his guilty conscience. Hence the Thessalian witches, who smeared themselves with human gore and made philtres of the hearts of famished children; hence the hags whose incantations were supposed by the Romans to have consumed, by instigation of Piso, the youth and life of Germanicus. Hence the witches of the middle ages, who invoked the Arch fiend, and solicited power from him to works of evil. In like manner the Laplanders, even now, sell the wind and the storm. The negroes deal in the horrible mysteries of Obi; and the Cambrians have their cursing well; while in the villages of Scotland, the Devil has a plot of land set apart to him which is never flowered, sown, or grassed, but devoted to cursing and barrenness. So deeply laid in the human heart is that principle which the Magi embodied into a system!

"But while the base and sordid followed after slavish and horrible superstition, those of more lofty feelings and nearer akin to heaven, looked

to heaven and not to hell for light and protection, &c. 'Oh, marvel not,' &c.

"After stanza 19, mention that the stars were supposed to exert their influences also during the day; to walk the world and report to the Almighty the deeds of the evil and the good. So one of them is introduced by Plautus, as watching over the fortunes of two shipwrecked orphans. The stars were therefore among the earliest objects of worship; with the Arabs in the time of Job, the Chaldeans of Babylon, &c. Zohara, or the planet Venus, believed to have been a woman, so beautiful as to have ensnared the angels Haruth and Maruth. (See Southey's Thalaba.) Hence the flattery of modern times introduced the names of the mighty of the earth among the constellations. The stars also kept an influence on the superstitions of mankind, even long after their altars had ceased to blaze, and men no longer paid them immediately their homage as to divinities. Thus judicial astrology, from Babylon and the Chaldees, penetrated to

Rome, and thence through all Europe. Even statesmen who feared no God, such as Lewis XI., and the Regent Duke of Orleans, paid regard to such prognostics; and the mind of Newton himself was for a time fascinated by them. Even now, the planet Venus is identified with the Virgin Mary, as 'Star of the Sea,' and receives an undue share of homage from the mariners of Spain, Portugal, and Sicily. What wonder, then, that in the ruder ages of which we are speaking, the stars and the host of heaven received the vows of the ignorant shepherd of Chaldea or Nineveh.

'But when thine orb, O sun,' &c.

"After 25, you may perhaps notice the punishment which these bloody and impure rites drew down on their votaries. First, the Canaanites, next the Phœnicians and apostate Israelites, last the Carthaginians, &c. Such were the abuses with which men profaned or rendered

more impious the blind idolatry which they paid to the sun,—

'But filled with holier joy the Persian stood,' &c.

"After 28, certainly introduce Belshazzar, and as many more of the prodigies which accompanied or foretold the fall of Babylon, as you may see convenient. Conclude with observing, how God made the growth of the religion of Zoroaster subservient to the security of his people, and describe the return of the Jews to Palestine.

"CANTO II.

"Egypt, and Greece, and Rome: worship of demi-gods—(their supposed miracles at Delphos and elsewhere)—its absurdities gave rise to the yet worse system of Epicurus—Fall of Rome.

"CANTO III.

"Gothic superstitions — Druids — Odin —

Thor, &c. Fairies—immortality of the soul more explicitly avowed by the northern nations than by the Greeks and Romans—inferiority of all these religions to the true—review of the present state of the earth—the blindness of Mohamedanism and Paganism overspreading so great a portion of it, &c.

" Anticipation of the complete triumph of the gospel.

" Bodryddan, May 1.

" Dear Madam,

" I have in the preceding pages thrown together all the hints which occurred to me as likely to be useful to your poem. I shall sincerely rejoice should any of them save you any trouble, or contribute to producing more lines as beautiful as those which I have already read. Your undertaking is certainly an arduous one, but I really think that its opening affords a very favourable augury of your final success.

" Believe me, dear Madam,

" Yours very truly,

" Reginald Heber."

It was at Bishop Heber's instigation, that Mrs. Hemans first attempted composition in the dramatic form. He was her adviser in the "Vespers of Palermo"—her next great effort. She began this drama originally without any idea of its being brought forward upon the stage, and would often say, that it would have never been completed, save for the encouraging interest taken in it by her gifted friend. The tragedy, when at last finished, was entrusted to the care of one, to whose kindness I owe the following letters. The uncertainties of the world behind the scenes, were, in her case, unusually protracted: the playful yet patient manner in which she refers to her suspense, should be a lesson to the "irritable race," especially when aspiring to that most difficult and brilliant of all literary honours—a signal dramatic success.

" Bronwylfa, St. Asaph, June 19, 1821.

" TO THE REV H. H. MILMAN.

" Sir,

" I have many acknowledgments to offer, for the very kind interest you take in the success of my dramatic attempt, and also for the approbation with which you have honoured it, and the value of which, I trust, I can fully appreciate. The obligation is considerably enhanced, by your having taken upon yourself the task of curtailment, a kindness which I was only prevented requesting from you, by my fear of trespassing too unreasonably upon your time and attention. I was aware of the happy talent possessed by the managers, for striking out all those parts of the play, which might at all tend to disturb the comfortable tranquillity of the audience; and I know in how distinguished a manner they had displayed this, their usual characteristic, in the instance of 'Fazio:' it is, therefore, a great satisfaction to me that the 'Sicilian Vespers' should be in the hands of one, upon whose judg-

ment I can rely with entire confidence. In the advisability of the curtailments you recommend, I entirely acquiesce, and I should think that the opening scene between Procida and the peasants might also be abridged with advantage. I have only one objection to make to the omission of the scene between Raimond and Constance in the third act,—I cannot help fancying that if it were entirely left out, Raimond would seem rather less occupied in providing for the safety of his 'ladye love' than would be strictly chivalrous, and his interference in her behalf at the close of the act would appear almost a casual occurrence. I think I should prefer shortening that scene considerably, and making such alterations as would remove that appearance of betrayal which you have remarked, and indeed, not without reason. If, however, you are still of opinion that it should be altogether omitted, be assured that I shall feel perfectly satisfied with the decision. I am fully aware that the piece, in its present state, is consider-

ably too long for the stage; for which, indeed, I should never have ventured to offer it, but for the advice of Mr. R. Heber, who kindly favoured me with his opinion on the subject. With regard to the objection of my having transplanted Etna to the neighbourhood of Palermo, in defiance of all geographical authorities, I must frankly confess, that the idea of adhering to the unity of place never once entered into my thoughts. I really always looked upon the English Drama as a 'chartered libertine,' which utterly disclaimed all such regulations, and thought that when once I had established myself upon the island, I was as much entitled to the unlimited range of its domains, 'from the centre all round to the sea,' as Robinson Crusoe to the possession of his undisputed territories. I shall strictly adhere to your advice of concealing my name, and trust that it will not yet be too late to secure the silence of the friends to whom I mentioned the subject, when consulting

them as to the best means of introducing the play to the managers. Should the secret transpire, notwithstanding my precautions, I trust the blame will not be laid upon feminine communicativeness. I think Sir Walter Scott's recommending publicity is something like the Holy Clerk of Copmanhurst declaiming in praise of abstinence and on the virtues of St. Dunstan's well. I fear the language of the piece is full of inaccuracies, from the great haste in which it was transcribed. I recollect that in the opening speech of the third act, the word 'summon' is repeated twice in the space of about three lines; in the last instance, it should have been 'rally.'"

TO THE SAME.

"Bronwylfa, October 12th, 1821.

. . . "A late domestic affliction has prevented my paying, as yet, much attention to the alterations which I intend to make. As I cannot

help looking forward to the day of trial with much more of dread than of sanguine expectation. I must willingly acquiesce in your recommendations of delay, and shall rejoice in having the respite as much prolonged as possible. I begin almost to shudder at my own presumption, and if it were not for the kind encouragement I have received from you and Mr. Reginald Heber, should be much more anxiously occupied in searching for any outlet of escape, than in attempting to overcome the difficulties which seem to obstruct my onward path.

"With regard to the translation from the French Sicilian Vespers, as I have determined upon changing the name of mine, (which is to be simply 'Procida,') I trust they will not materially interfere with each other. It would be a source of serious regret to me, should mine be ultimately performed without Mr. Charles Kemble. . . . . as you have inspired me with a most devout horror of the whole race of managers. I begin to look at them very much

in the light of so many Ogres, and to feel that it will be almost sufficient cause for self-gratulation, if I put my head into the wolf's jaws and escape unhurt. My own inexperience in transactions of this nature, is just what might be expected from one, whose life has hitherto been passed among the Welsh mountains. It is, indeed, my only apology for the trouble to which I have been the cause of subjecting you." * * *

TO THE SAME.

"Bronwylfa, Dec. 5th, 1821.

"My dear Sir,

"I beg to offer you my sincere congratulations on your recent and most gratifying success, of which few have heard with more lively satisfaction than myself. Your recollection of my interests at such a time demands my warmest thanks. I have had the pleasure of receiving your letter from Oxford, and was much gratified by the intelligence it contains respecting my play, as I had always intended, and hoped, that

Mr. C. Kemble would take the part of Raimond di Procida. * * *

It was very much my wish in changing the name of the piece, to have called it '*The Procidi*,' but it was suggested to me that such a title would be far too Italian for an English audience, and, indeed, the various corruptions of the name *Faxio*, would make me hesitate on such a point. If, however, you should be of a different opinion, will you have the kindness to alter it into the above? it can make no great difference, as even with the name as it now stands, I think I may be tolerably certain of its being turned into *Prosody* in a short time. . . . . As for Vittoria, I dare say I shall have her transformed into a perfect Drawcansir. It will give me great pleasure if you think the piece improved by the various alterations I have made. I am, however, much too sensible of its many defects, not to feel extremely *tremulous* at the idea of its approaching trial. Whatever

may be the result, allow me to assure you how much I shall ever feel indebted to your kindness on this occasion, and with what grateful esteem I am, dear sir,

"Your truly obliged,

"F. HEMANS."

Another fragment from the same series of letters, though not strictly relating to the drama in question, may here be introduced.

"March 7th, 1822.

* * "I cannot conclude, without expressing, however inadequately, the delight with which I have just risen from the perusal of the 'Martyr of Antioch.' It has added another noble proof to those you have already given the world, of the power and dignity which genius derives from its consecration to high and sacred purposes. Never were the 'gay religions, full of pomp and gold,' so beautifully contrasted

with the deep and internal sublimity of Christianity. I could dwell upon many parts which have made a lasting impression upon my mind, did I not fear that it would appear almost presumptuous to offer a tribute of praise so insignificant as mine, to that which must have already received the suffrage of all who are entitled to judge of excellence." * * * *

"Bronwylfa, March 26th, 1823.

"My dear Sir,

"I feel particularly sensible for the considerate kindness which dictated your last letter to me. I had been somewhat surprised, but not in the least uneasy on seeing Miss Mitford's play announced, as I felt satisfied that had any thing occurred to prevent the ultimate representation of mine, I might depend on you giving me information. With regard to the point of precedence, it is one to which I am wholly indifferent; my only anxiety is to be relieved

from the long suspense which circumstances have unavoidably occasioned." . . .

At last, after all these changes, and caballings, and uncertainties, "The Vespers of Palermo" was brought forward at Covent Garden in the month of December, 1823: the principal characters being taken by Mr. Young, Mr. Charles Kemble, Mr. Yates, Mrs. Bartley, and Miss F. H. Kelly. Much might be said of the causes which prevented this play from realizing, when represented, the high hopes which had been entertained of its success by those who had seen it in manuscript, were this the place for discussing green-room matters, or for entering into a critical anatomy of its structure, and the manner in which the authoress worked out her original conception. To myself, I confess, that especially as it approaches its close, the "Vespers of Palermo" appears rather a collection of separate high-toned and striking scenes, than

a display of conflicting passions inevitably developing themselves in such a series of events, as *must* by their sequence and coherence work up the interest of the audience to the true tragic point. It is interesting to see how Mrs. Hemans bore the destruction of her long cherished hopes. The following letter was written immediately upon her receiving the news of the tragedy being withdrawn.

TO THE REV. H. H. MILMAN.

" Bronwylfa, December 16, 1823.

" My dear Sir,

" It is difficult to part with the hopes of three years without some painful feelings, but your kind letter has been of more service to me than I can attempt to describe; I will not say that it revives my hopes of success, because I think it better that I should 'file my mind,' to prevent those hopes from gaining any ascendancy: but

it sets in so clear a light the causes of failure, that my disappointment has been greatly softened by its perusal. The many friends from whom I have heard on this occasion, express but one opinion. As to Miss Kelly's acting, and its fatal effect on the fortunes of the piece, I cannot help thinking that it will be impossible to counteract the unfavourable impression which this must have produced; and I almost wish, as far as relates to my own private feelings, that the attempt may not be made. I shall not, however, interfere in any way on the subject. I have not heard from Mr. Kemble, but I have written both to him and to Mr. Young, to express my grateful sense of their splendid exertions in support of the piece. As a female, I cannot help feeling rather depressed by the extreme severity with which I have been treated in the morning papers; I know not why this should be, for I am sure I should not have attached the slightest value to their praise, but I suppose it is only a proper chastisement for

my temerity; for a female who shrinks from such things, has certainly no business to write tragedies.

"For your support and assistance, as well as that of my other friends, I cannot be too grateful, nor can I ever consider any transaction of my life unfortunate, which has given me the privilege of calling you a friend, and afforded me the recollection of so much long tried kindness. Ever believe me, my dear sir, most faithfully,

"Your obliged,

"F. HEMANS."

"The Vespers of Palermo" was afterwards produced in Edinburgh with much greater success than had attended it in the metropolis. Sir Walter Scott wrote the epilogue, and I believe the letters of courtesy, which passed between Mrs. Hemans and himself on the subject, gave rise to their subsequent acquaintance.

"I hear," says he, writing of the play, in his usual manly and unaffected style, "from every quarter most favourable accounts of its success, in which my country-folks have done more credit to themselves than you. I am really ashamed of your acknowledgments, having done so little to deserve them. I sent Mrs. Siddons an epilogue stuffed with parish jokes and bad puns, which her excellent speaking made pass current as the work of a better hand."

Mrs. Hemans never spoke of her tragedy without gratefully recurring to the kindness and sympathy shown her during its progress, and upon its failure. She would say, too, that she rejoiced in being prevented by the latter from further turning her attention to composition for the stage. As she advanced in life, her taste for the acted drama gradually decreased; she thought that the decline of its popularity must of necessity keep pace with an increase of the refinement and cultivation of thought. But she never lost her reverence for, or delight

in, our own noble old dramatic writers, or those of Italy, Spain, and Germany; and she would speak with enthusiasm of the many admirable plays produced since the century came in—how gloriously different in their passion and poetry—how strangely different in their success—from the efforts of the playwrights in those more palmy days of the stage, when the maid-servant, to excuse herself for weeping at Miss More's "Percy," pleaded, "Well, ma'am, and a great many ladies of quality did so too." Almost her greatest favourite among modern dramas was Miss Baillie's "Ethwald:" perhaps she liked this all the more for the association connected with it, of her having first read it among the ruins of Conway Castle. Coleridge's "Remorse," was another she would often mention, and she could never speak enough of his version of "Wallenstein,"—no translation, but a transfusion from one language to another, of one of the noblest works of modern times. A part of her indifference to the acted drama, may be

ascribed to the seclusion of her residence, which prevented her from seeing the principal artists of the day. She never, I believe, witnessed the performance of any great tragedian, save Kean. To his splendid *meteoric* talent she did full justice; she said that, "seeing him act was like reading Shakspeare by flashes of lightning." "My dear madam," replied one in whose hearing she gave utterance to this fantasy, 'but how could a flash of lightning last long enough to read a play of Shakspeare's by?"

The Welsh Melodies which first introduced Mrs. Hemans to the public as a song writer, had already made their appearance, as will be seen by the letters which follow. Some of them are remarkable for the melody of their numbers, in particular the song to the well known air, "Ar hyd y nos." Her fine feeling for music, in which, as also in drawing, she would have signally excelled, could she have bestowed the time and patient labour requisite for obtaining mastery over the mechanical diffi-

culties of these arts, assisted her not only in her choice of measures, but also of her words; and, although, in speaking of her songs, it must be remarked that some of the later ones are almost too full of meaning to require the further clothing of sweet sound, instead of their being left, as in outline, waiting for the musician's colouring hand, they must be all praised as flowing and expressive; and it is needless to remind the reader how many of them, united with her sister's music, have obtained the utmost popularity. She had well studied the national character of the Welsh airs, and the allusions to the legendary history of the ancient Britons, which her songs contain, are happily chosen. But it was an instinct with Mrs. Hemans to catch the picturesque points of national character, as well as of national music; in the latter she always delighted. A fragment of a letter is before me, written shortly after she had heard the Tyrolese minstrels. "What a spirit of the Alps breathes through all their wild mountain music;

but it should be heard out amid rocks and torrents. It is like transplanting a forest pine into a parterre, to bring it into a room crowded with all the beauty and fashion of the vicinity."*

* It was on this occasion that some one, (I believe Mrs. Hemans herself) asked Maria Rainer the common question, whether she pined much for her own country; her answer was, "*Ich habe ein Kind dort*"—"I have a child there."

CHAPTER III.

Correspondence—Queen of Prussia—Welsh Scenery—Welsh Melodies—Bardic System—Tieck—Miss Baillie's plays—Their female characters—Iturbide—Change of residence—Poland—"The Siege of Valencia," &c.—"The voice of Spring"—"The Hebrew mother"—"Körner and his Sister"—Letters to Mr. G. F. Richardson—"The Forest Sanctuary"—"The Records of Woman"—Mrs. Hemans' eagerness in composition—Rhyllon—Her favourite dingle—Her American reputation and friendships—Anecdotes.

The following series of letters (kindly forwarded to me while these "Memorials" were going through the press,) illustrates the years embraced in the last chapter. It will be seen that the lady to whom they are addressed was a judicious

and kind literary confidante. There is little to be added to the notices which they contain of Mrs. Hemans' studies, and wishes, and habits during the time above mentioned,—one of the happiest periods of her life. The progress and developement of the peculiar powers and fancies of her mind, may be as distinctly traced in her correspondence as in the works to which her letters refer.

"Bronwylfa, Nov. 15, 1822.

"My dear Miss ——,

"Accept my sincere thanks for the very kind letter with which you have favoured me: allow me at the same time to assure you that any attention it might have been in our power to have offered you and Mr. ——, would have been inadequate to express the warm interest you have excited in our minds. Believe me, the few hours we passed in your society, though so heavily clouded by recent affliction, will be long remembered both by my sister and myself;

and, to use an expression of our old Welsh bards, we shall look back to them as to "*green spots on the floods*," for our paths, in this retired part of the world, are seldom crossed by those who leave any deeper impression upon our memory than 'the little lines of yesterday.' . . . . .

"I believe I mentioned to you the extraordinary letters with which I was once persecuted by ———; he, with whom 'Queen Mab hath been.' It was rather a singular circumstance that the parcel in which Mr. ——'s work was forwarded to me, contained, at the same time, an elegy on the death of that deluded character, sent from I know not what quarter: it was in a separate sealed packet, addressed to me, to the care of Mr. Murray, and whether meant as what the French call "*hommage de l'auteur*," or sent from any other person, I dare say I shall never find out. . . . . .

"We are very happy that you find the Memoir of the Queen of Prussia so interesting. I met with a little German piece of poetry a few days

since on the subject of her death, which struck me from its extreme simplicity, and enclose you a translation of it in the exact measure of the original.* I should have enjoyed crossing Penmaenmaur with you exceedingly; it is a favourite scene of mine, and always strikes me as one formed by nature to be consecrated to some heroic action. It has, most likely, witnessed many a conflict in days of yore, as there is an ancient British circumvallation round one of its peaks, and it is supposed to have been one of the strongholds of the country. My mother and all my family unite in every kind remembrance to Mr. —— and yourself; and allow me to assure you of the regard and esteem with which I am most truly yours,

"F. HEMANS."

* "The Brandenburgh Harvest Song," published among the "Lays of many Lands."

"Bronwylfa, Dec. 19, 1822.

"My dear Miss ——

". . . . Although not born in Wales, my long residence here has sufficiently naturalized me to make your admiration of our mountain-scenery highly gratifying. I am no stranger to the country around Llangollen, and I dare say you know that its beauty and grandeur derive additional interest both from history and tradition. The ruin which, I dare say, you remarked on the height of rather a grotesque rock above the valley of Llangollen, was formerly the residence of a distinguished Welsh beauty, and the poem in which the Cambrian bard has with much enthusiasm celebrated the perfections of the fair Myfanwy is still extant. I once passed through that scenery at night, when its sublimity was inexpressibly heightened by the fires which had been lighted to burn the gorse on the mountains. The broad masses of light and shadow which they occasioned gave it a character of almost savage grandeur, which made a powerful impression upon my mind.

"I can easily imagine your indignation at the sight of stage-coaches amongst such scenery. You will, therefore, I trust, sympathize with my feelings on finding, upon my last visit to Conway, the *ci-devant* picturesque little island, in the midst of the river, metamorphosed into something like a raised pie, for the better accommodation of the proposed bridge. I am not so moon-struck as to quarrel with civilized life, and all its advantages, but I own I should like occasionally to be transported to some scene where I might see what nature was, when utterly untamed, with her hair *uncurled*, and in all her original wildness. . . . . "

"Bronwylfa, January 31st, 1823.

"My dear Miss ——,

"I sincerely hope your anxieties on your sister's account have been by this time alleviated, and that your mind will daily become more tranquillized in the improving prospect of her recovery. The intensely cold weather with which

we have been visited, must have been very trying to an invalid suffering from the complaint you describe. For my own part, I must say I delight in the utmost rigour of the winter, which almost seems to render it *necessary* that the mind should become fully acquainted with its own resources, and find means, in drawing them forth, to cheer

'With mental light the melancholy day.'

Soft winds and bright blue skies make me, or dispose me to be, a sad idler; and it is only by an effort, and a strong feeling of necessity, that I can fix my mind steadily to any sedentary pursuit, when the sun is shining over all the mountains, and the birds singing 'at heaven's gate;' but I find frost and snow most salutary monitors, and always make exertion my enjoyment during their continuance. I am delighted with your enthusiasm on the subject of the Spanish war, the events of which are so associated in my mind with the most vivid recollec-

tions of my early youth, that I could almost fancy I had passed that period of my life in the days of Chivalry, so high and ardent were the feelings they excited. I shall be quite impatient for the entire perusal of Southey's work, which my brother is going to order for his library. As for . . . I read enough to be quite satisfied, (perhaps satiated would be a better word,) without proceeding further: except . . . . . I do not know that I ever read any thing of his with pleasure. His poetry has, to me, such a sickly exotic scent; if I may use such an expression, it *smells of musk*—and what butterfly-winged angels! Compare them with Milton's, the 'severe in youthful beauty,' and do not they remind one of the gaudy Cupids with opera-looking festoons of roses, on a Parisian fan?

"I do not know whether I mentioned to you that I had been engaged, last summer, in writing words to our national Welsh airs which are just published. I found it a very interesting employment, as it made me acquainted with many

traditions and legends of the country, some of which are extremely striking. . . . . ."

In a subsequent letter allusion is made to the uncertainty which attended the production of the "Vespers of Palermo." "You will smile," it concludes, "when I tell you of my having *stolen* time to-day from much more serious employments, for the very important purpose of making *garlands* for my little boys to dance with, as it is the birth-day of the youngest one."

"Bronwylfa, May 14th, 1823.

"My dear Miss ———,

"I feel very sensible of the kind interest you take in my literary anxieties. If all my friends made as much haste to relieve them as you have done, I should have little to suffer from *suspense* at least, to whatever other pains and penalties 'the feverish being' of an author may be subjected. I am very glad to find that you

have been made acquainted with the true causes of my *tragic* disappointment. It is also not a little pleasant to me that I am thus emancipated from the feeling of restraint under which, from the strict injunction of secrecy imposed upon me, (for what purpose I know not,) I found myself while writing to you on the subject. I could really suspect, if it did not seem almost high treason against the lords of the creation, that this padlock had been fastened upon *my* tongue in order to leave *theirs* the uninterrupted pleasure of first communication: however, be that as it may, I rejoice to have done with mystery, and to find myself, according to my favourite bardic expression, 'in the face of the sun, and in the eye of light.' Do you not think it was a noble motto for all the proceedings of our ancient Welsh bards? and the title also which their order assumed—'They who are free throughout the world,' has always struck me as being particularly fine. Some time or other I must try to make you acquainted with their magnificent principles and system; that is, if you are

not so already. How I have wandered from Mr. —— to our old Taliesin, (a much nobler personage in truth,) I really know not: but I was going to tell you, how much, notwithstanding my unavoidable disappointment, I had been gratified with Mr. Kemble's conduct throughout the whole transaction. He has shown so much consideration for my interests, and regard for my name, that I feel perfect confidence in his intentions as to the future. If ever I should write a play with a part expressly . . . . . I shall certainly make it 'out-Herod Herod.' He would, I should think, particularly like to represent an American Indian at the stake, or the Mexican emperor upon the burning coals; and in my opinion, there can be no real grandeur unless *mind* is made the ruling power, and its ascendancy asserted even amidst the wildest storms of passion. I rejoice that you were so much pleased with the miscellaneous poems attached to the little work of which you have so kindly under-

taken the superintendence.* The 'Voice of Spring' expresses some peculiar feelings of my own, although my life has yet been unvisited by any affliction so deeply impressive in all its circumstances as the one you have been called upon to sustain. Yet I cannot but feel every year, with 'the return of the violet,' how much the shadows of my mind have deepened since its last appearance, and to me the spring, with all its joy and beauty, is generally a time of thoughtfulness rather than mirth. I think the most delightful poetry I know upon the subject of this season, is contained in the works of Tieck, a German poet, with whom you are perhaps acquainted; but the feelings he expresses are of a very different character from those I have described to you, seeming all to proceed from an overflowing sense of life and joy. If you have never met with any of his poems, I will get my sister to transcribe some of them for you, (as my own time is so much limited,) on her return

* "The Last Constantine, The Siege of Valencia," &c.

from Conway, where she is now with some old friends on a visit.

. . . . . .

"I have not yet seen the book you mention, 'Captain Franklin's Journey,' but from your account it must be painfully interesting. Strange to say, I have hardly had time to read at all lately; I seem to have been 'plunged into a pit of ink,' from which I am only now beginning to extricate myself. When I have quite regained my freedom from it, I hope to have the pleasure of addressing you oftener; in the mean time believe me very truly yours,

"FELICIA HEMANS."

"Bronwylfa, May 15th, 1823.

"My dear Miss ——,

. . . . . .

"Have you seen a collection of poems by living authors, edited by Joanna Baillie, for the benefit of a friend? She was kind enough to send me a copy, as I was one of her contributors: I mention it to you, principally to

call your attention, should you meet with the book, to a very fine translation by Sotheby, of Schiller's magnificent '*Lied von der Glocke*,' a piece so very difficult to translate with effect, that I should have hardly thought it possible to give it so much spirit and grace in another language. The other poems in the volume are, I think, inferior to what might be expected from the high names of the authors: I was best pleased with Sir Walter Scott's and Mr. Milman's. I never, until very lately, met with a tragedy of Miss Baillie's, which is, I believe, less generally known than her other works; 'The Family Legend.' I was much pleased with it, particularly her delineation of the heroine. Indeed, nothing in all her writings delights me so much as her general idea of what is beautiful in the female character. There is so much gentle fortitude, and deep self-devoting affection in the women whom she portrays, and they are so perfectly different from the pretty '*un-idea'd* girls,' who seem to form the *beau ideal* of our whole sex in the works of some modern poets. The latter re-

mind me of a foolish saying, I think of Diderot's, that in order to describe a woman, you should write with a pen made of a peacock's feather, and dry the writing with the dust from butterflies' wings. Have you seen the lately published Memoirs of Lady Griseld Baillie? She was an ancestress, I believe, of Joanna's, and her delightful character seems to have been the model her descendant has copied in some of the dramas she introduces. I believe I never told you how fully I agreed with you in your opinion of the 'Trials of Margaret Lyndsay.' The book is certainly full of deep feeling and beautiful language, but there are many passages which, I think, would have been better omitted; and although I can bear as much fictitious woe as most people, I really began to feel it an infliction at last.

"With much regard,

"Believe me very truly yours,

"FELICIA HEMANS."

"Bronwylfa, July 2nd, 1823.

"My dear Miss ——,

. . . . . "I shall be curious to see Lord F. Gower's Translation of 'Faust.' It is a bold undertaking: that play has always appeared to me one of the most difficult in the German language; some of the scenes are so bewildering, as to leave the author's views and intentions a complete mystery. . . . . I have not forgotten my promise of making you acquainted, at least as far as may be in my power, with the principles and system of the ancient British bards. The idea entertained of the bardic character appears to me particularly elevated and beautiful. The bard was not allowed, in any way, to become a party in political or religious dispute; he was recognised so completely as the herald of peace, under the title of 'Bard of the Isle of Britain,' that a naked weapon was not allowed to be displayed in his presence. He passed unmolested from one hostile country to another,

and if he appeared, in his uni-coloured robe, (which was azure, being the emblem of peace and truth,) between two contending armies, the battle was immediately suspended. One of the general titles of the order was, 'Those who are free throughout the world,' and their motto, 'The Truth against the World.'" . . . .

Further letters of the same series allude to a visitation of death in her family circle; speaking of which Mrs. Hemans says, "You will be surprised to hear that I never *looked on death* before." A letter, bearing a later date, in which reference is made to the approaching representation of the "Vespers of Palermo," is so similar in tone and expression to those addressed to Mr. Milman on the subject, that to insert it would be a fruitless repetition: the same reason makes it unnecessary for me to make use of a letter addressed to her actively kind friend, in which she mentions its failure. One trait, how-

ever, deserves notice, as illustrating the tendency to hope, and to take comfort, which was so abiding a spring of her character to the last. She describes the satisfaction she has found in the circumstance that the failure of her play has aroused a near and dear member of her family from the state of depression into which he had been plunged by the bereavement alluded to.

"Bronwylfa, March 6th, 1824.

"My dear Miss ——,

. . . . . "I have been very much interested in your account of Iturbide, whose singular fate seems to afford matter for serious reflection. Can you tell me whether he is, as I have heard asserted, a descendant of the ancient Incas, or was the circumstance only invented to excite a romantic interest in his cause? I wish he would publish, instead of a memorial, a history of his life. The revolutions in a powerful *mind*,

under circumstances so changeful and extraordinary, would, I think, be more impressive than those of an empire." . . . . .

June 19th, 1824.

. . . . "I am particularly obliged to you for the transcript of Iturbide's letter to his children, on which I set much value, it is so strikingly characteristic, and so full of the *Spaniard* as well as the father. Your descriptions had taught me to feel so much interest in him, that I heard with regret of his return to Mexico; I should think him so much more likely to be the victim, than the composer, of the disturbances in that country. I look forward with much interest to the promised article upon Chili in the forthcoming Quarterly. I had read that on Mexico with great interest, and thought that it *must* be by Mr. ——. I have heard nothing further on the subject of the 'Vespers:' indeed I do not wish

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that any attempt should be made to produce it in London, as I am convinced it could have no chance of impartial treatment after all that has passed. If ever I should try the fortune of the theatre again, I must endeavour to ensure the strictest secrecy as to my name till my fate shall be decided: there is a prejudice, I am satisfied, against a female dramatist, which it would be hardly possible to surmount. I send you some lines which I composed lately on the first appearance of summer. As I think a little piece of mine, 'The Voice of Spring,' was a favourite of yours, I trust you may be pleased with this as a *pendant* to it. This letter will most probably find you in Somersetshire, where I hope you have enjoyed something like sunshine, which I think cannot but have its influence on the mind and spirits, let philosophers say what they will. I have been making arrangements lately for placing my eldest boy at school, and intend taking him myself about the latter end of next month to Bangor, where he is to remain.

It is a sort of epoch in a mother's life, which cannot but at first make her thoughtful, as the time of her own superintendence and influence over her child seems almost to end with this, his first entrance *into the world*, as it certainly must be considered. I shall probably make some stay in Caernarvonshire, as I shall be anxious to visit him once or twice in his new situation before I return home. If your sisters should be with you, pray offer them mine and my sister's kind regards, and believe me always,

"Very truly yours,

"FELICIA HEMANS."

"Nov. 20th, 1824.

. . . . . .

"After the interest you had taught me to feel in the fortunes of poor Iturbide, I really was shocked, as *you* must have been in no ordinary degree, by the sudden intelligence of his violent death. It was impossible not to feel that

his proposed attempt must be fraught with danger, yet there was something absolutely startling in so swift a transition from the pride of hope and enterprise to the end of all. Of the immediate circumstances which led to his death, I could obtain no clear idea from the newspapers in which I saw it mentioned, nor whether the act itself was sanctioned by the Mexican government. Perhaps you can tell me something of the fate of his widow and children. We are just reading Hall's work on South America, which you mention in your last letter, and are exceedingly interested in it. How truly may that be called a *new* world to which he introduces us! I was particularly struck with his visit to the Araucanian territory, which the Spanish poet, Ercilla, has made a sort of classic ground. The noble character of General San Martin, which Captain Hall's temperate style of writing prevents our considering as the least exaggerated, is really, in our times and circumstances, not less surprising than interesting, and

engages every feeling on his side. I am at present engaged on a poem of some length, the idea of which was suggested to me by some passages in your friend Mr. Blanco White's delightful writings. It relates to the sufferings of a Spanish Protestant in the time of Philip the Second; and is supposed to be narrated by the sufferer himself, who escapes to America. I am very much interested in my subject, and hope to complete the poem in the course of the winter. I remained some time in the Bangor neighbourhood about Midsummer, and had the satisfaction of leaving my boy quite happy at school, where he is making a rapid progress. His brothers are all well at home, where I hope their noisy steps and voices will long resound." . . .

"Bronwylfa, Jan. 26, 1825.

"My dear Miss ——,

"It appears so long since I have heard from you, that I have for some time past been inclined

to fear some illness in your family may have prevented your writing. I shall be truly glad to know from yourself that this is not the case, and that you received my last letter in safety. You will find from Mr. ——— that I am again likely to appear before the public. I cannot help feeling more anxiety than usual on the occasion. I believe it is the ill-nature apparently excited by the 'Vespers' which has disagreeably enlarged my knowledge of the world, and given me a timidity to which, at least in its present degree, I was before a stranger. But I have no choice, and cannot do otherwise than persevere in the course to which circumstances introduced me. . . . . We, that is, my mother and sister, with myself and my family, intend to change our residence about the time of this event.* I am anxious to settle near some great public school, of which I could have the advantage for my boys. We are as yet quite undecided, but I fear our removal from

* The close of April is the time referred to—the event, her eldest brother's second marriage.

this country is unavoidable, as its beauty and retirement, however dear to me, must not overpower in my mind, what I daily feel more and more to be the interests of my children. I sometimes think it might be more advantageous to myself to reside nearer London, but I fear the expenses at Harrow or Eton would be too great not to overbalance the recommendations." . . .

Rhyllon, Nov. 24.

"My dear Miss ——,

"I should have written to greet you immediately on your arrival, of which we have heard with sincere pleasure, but I hardly thought it likely that, with so many new and striking objects to surround you, you could have been so punctual to the purposed time of return. I owe you many thanks for your most interesting letter from Poland, which, besides the gratification such a proof of a friend's remembrance must always afford, gave me much information

with regard to scenes and people hardly better known to us than those of another hemisphere. How much and how delightfully must your store of ideas and recollections have been enlarged by this interesting tour! I believe it was the perusal of Campbell's 'Pleasures of Hope,' in early childhood, which first excited my feelings of sympathy for the Poles. My sister became acquainted with some of that nation during her residence on the Continent, and the deep and indignant sense they entertained of their country's degradation made much the same impression on her mind which it appears to have done on yours. Such a feeling, if general, is surely the best pledge of eventual deliverance. I hope we may expect, some day, to be instructed as well as amused by the observations which Mr. ——— must have made on his journey, and which must be well worth bringing before the public: the ground certainly affords ample room for an enlightened mind to expatiate upon, and is not, like that of Italy, so

thoroughly beaten, that a person must be stupid who could not find his way over Alps and Appenines, and through the very streets of Rome, by the help of his predecessors alone. . . . . I do not know what I can tell you of myself and my family that will at all repay you for the pleasure your late letters have bestowed upon me. Whilst you have been hearing new languages spoken, amidst scenes of barbaric magnificence, as well as almost uncivilized rudeness, we have been quietly settling down into our new residence, planting roses, training honeysuckles, and keeping our grass-plots in order—very delightful occupations certainly, but such as afford few materials wherewith to amuse our correspondents. That last word, however, reminds me of an interesting letter by which I have been lately surprised from a Professor in the Cambridge University, New England. He informs me that an edition of my writings is wished for at Boston, and most kindly offers to superintend its publication. He has also sent

me some American works on religious subjects, with which I have been much pleased. I am very much obliged to Mr. ——— for his kindness in procuring me the German books I wished; I shall also be glad to have De Lamartine's Poems, of which I have heard a good deal, but do not possess them. I do not think I shall wish to have *Die Goldne Vliess*, as in general I prefer the romantic to the classic poetry of Germany. But perhaps you can tell me whether it is Jason's golden fleece, or the order of knighthood so called, which gives its title to the work, as the latter would be far more attractive to me. . . . . .

"The Siege of Valencia, The last Constantine, and other Poems," were published in the course of the year 1823. This volume was marked by more distinct evidences of originality than any of Mrs. Hemans' previous works. None of her after poems contain finer bursts

of strong, fervid, indignant poetry than "The Siege of Valencia:" its story—a thrilling conflict between maternal love and the inflexible spirit of chivalrous honour—afforded to her an admirable opportunity of giving utterance to the two master interests of her mind. It is a tale that will bear a second reading—though it must be confessed, that, as in the case of "The Vespers of Palermo," somewhat of a monotony of colouring is thrown over its scenes by the unchanged employment of a lofty and enriched phraseology, which would have gained in emphasis by its being more sparingly used. Ximena, too, all glowing and heroic as she is; stirring up the sinking hearts of the besieged citizens, with her battle song of the Cid, and dying, as it were, of that strain of triumph —is too spiritual, too saintly, wholly to carry away the sympathies. Our imagination is kindled by her splendid, high-toned devotion —our tears are called forth by the grief of her mother, the stately Elmina; broken down but

not degraded, by the agony of maternal affection, to connive at a treachery she is too noble wholly to carry through. The scenes with her husband are admirable—some of her speeches absolutely startle us with their passion and intensity—the following for instance:

Love! love! there are soft smiles and gentle words,
And there are faces skilful to put on
The look we trust in—and 'tis mockery all!
—A faithless mist, a desert-vapour, wearing
The brightness of clear waters, thus to cheat
The thirst that semblance kindled!—There is none,
In all this cold and hollow world, no fount
Of deep, strong, deathless love, save that within
A mother's heart. It is but pride, wherewith
To his fair son the father's eye doth turn,
Watching his growth. Aye, on the boy he looks,
The bright glad creature springing in his path,
But as the heir of his great name, the young
And stately tree, whose rising strength ere long
Shall bear his trophies well.—And this is love!
This is *man's* love!—What marvel?—*you* ne'er made
Your breast the pillow of his infancy,

While to the fullness of your glad heart's heavings
His fair cheek rose and fell; and his bright hair
Waved softly to your breath!—*You* ne'er kept watch
Beside him till the last pale star had set,
And morn, all dazzling, as in triumph, broke
On your dim weary eye: not *yours* the face
Which, early faded thro' fond care for him,
Hung o'er his sleep, and, duly as heaven's light
Was there to greet his wakening! *You* ne'er smoothed
His couch, ne'er sung him to his rosy rest,
Caught his least whisper, when his voice from yours
Had learn'd soft utterance; pressed your lip to his,
When fever parch'd it; hush'd his wayward cries
With patient, vigilant, never wearied love!
No; these are *woman's* tasks!—In these her youth,
Her bloom of cheek, and buoyancy of heart,
Steal from her all unmarked—My boys! my boys!
Hath vain affection borne with all for this?
—— Why were ye given me?

But enough has been said to indicate, and my purpose is not to criticise. The volume in question contains, also, the "Voice of

Spring;" one of the first of what may be called Mrs. Hemans' fanciful lyrics, which presently became as familiar as the music of some popular composer, when brought to our doors by wandering minstrels. It contains, too, the "Songs of the Cid;"—he was always one of her favourite heroes;—perhaps, among all her chivalresque ballads, none will be found superior to "The Cid's funeral procession." The "Last Constantine" is in her colder and more classical manner.

It would be wearisomely superfluous to enumerate the long series of lyrics which she now poured forth with increasing earnestness and rapidity, and without which none of the lighter periodicals of the day made its appearance. One or two, however, must be mentioned, as certain to survive so long as the short poem shall be popular in England. "The Treasures of the Deep," "The Hour of Death," "The Graves of a Household," "The Cross in the

Wilderness," are all admirable. With these, too, may be mentioned those poems in which a short descriptive *recitative* (to borrow a word from the opera) introduces a lyrical burst of passion, or regret, or lamentation. This form of composition became so especially popular in America, that hardly a poet has arisen since the influence of Mrs. Hemans' genius made itself felt on the other side of the Atlantic, who has not attempted something of a similar subject and construction. "The Hebrew Mother" has been followed by an infinite number of sketches from scripture: this lyric, too, should be particularized as having made friends for its authoress among those of the ancient faith in England. Among the last strangers who visited her, eager to thank her for the pleasure her writings had afforded them, were a Jewish gentleman and lady who entreated to be admitted by the author of the "Hebrew Mother."

Perhaps, however, the most touching of all these shorter poems is the lyric, "Körner and

his Sister,"—the first in which, as far as I can trace, the influence of Mrs. Hemans' German studies is perceptible. "Her knowledge of the language, sufficiently to read and understand it," says her sister, "seems to my recollection things as far back as if she had been born with it; but I think that her great delight in it may be dated from the year 1821, when I myself came home from Germany, brimful of enthusiasm, and with a good many books which were new to her; and our brother, being then at the Vienna embassy, used to supply us most liberally with *Deutsche Classiker* (German Classics) of all sorts. I well remember the first thing we read together after my coming home. Though a trifle, it seemed like the spark that was to kindle a great flame. It was that little piece of Schiller's, the "*Nadowessiche Todtenklage*" (Nadowessian Dirge.) She was enchanted with its melody, and particularly struck with that verse—

Wohl ihm er ist hingegangen,
Wo kein schnee mehr ist!*

the same idea with her own·

There shall be no more snow,

in the "Tyrolese Evening Hymn."

The three following letters, relating to the beautiful lyric in question, and giving Mrs. Hemans' own feelings with regard to its subject, were addressed to Mr. G. F. Richardson, the author of a Life of Körner, and of translations from his Poems. It may be as well to remark, that "Körner and his Sister" had been forwarded to the father of that fiery-hearted hero, and was by him translated into German. The poem called forth a few simple and heartfelt lines of acknowledgment.

"Dear Sir,

"A very few days have passed since I had

* It is well for him, he is gone away
Where there is no more snow.

the pleasure of receiving your interesting works, and I delayed writing until I could tell you that I had gratified myself by their perusal. I must first, however, thank you for the elegant lines with which you have honoured my name in the Life of Körner, and which cannot but render the work so much the more valuable to me. You have, I think, been particularly successful in some of the most difficult pieces, especially the wild "Sword Song," the peculiarities of which are so great, that I should have hardly thought it possible to give it so much effect in English. The "Fatherland," too, that beautiful and thrilling strain, loses nothing of its original free spirit in your hands. I sincerely hope that the success of this highly-interesting work may encourage you to proceed in the rich paths of German literature. Körner has ever been an object of peculiar enthusiasm to me; his character is one of which it is impossible to read without a feeling almost of *pain* that such a spirit has passed away, with all its high and

holy thoughts, and is never to be known to us on this side the grave. How mournful it seems to think of his aged father and mother surviving both their gifted children! They would, I am sure, be deeply gratified by your intended tribute of respect to their sorrows, and to their son's memory. I know not the exact address of the father, but a copy directed to Monsieur Von Körner, and sent under cover to Madame de Schülze, (cadette,) née de Struensee, 78, Unter den Linden, Berlin, would be safely forwarded to him. My sister is in correspondence with this lady, and will write to prepare her for the arrival of the packet, which had better, if possible, be forwarded in the ambassador's bag.

"I will not apologize for the mistake respecting your name, which has had the agreeable consequence of introducing to me your own elegant "Poetic Hours." Allow me to assure you, dear sir, of the pleasure I should have in seeing you here, should any thing induce you to

visit this country;—and believe me to be, very truly,

"Your much obliged,

"Felicia Hemans.

"Rhyllon St. Asaph, July 25th, 1827."

"Sir,

"I beg to thank you for the great pleasure afforded me by your very interesting letter. I rejoice to find that you are in direct communication with Körner's father; it is a privilege you have well earned. The message you have had the kindness to transmit me from that revered old man delighted me much. I *do* read German, as you suppose, and could therefore fully appreciate its affecting simplicity. The idea of Körner's death-day struck my imagination forcibly, and gave rise to the inclosed lines,* which I should be much obliged by your transmitting,

* "The Death Day of Körner."

with your own interesting memorial, to his parents. Though the last anniversary of that day will have long been past before they receive the lines, yet I think it cannot but soothe them to find that it has been remembered in a distant land.

"With sincere esteem, believe me, sir,

"Your obliged and faithful servant,

"FELICIA HEMANS.

"Rhyllon, Sept. 7th."

"Dear Sir,

"Allow me cordially to thank you for the very high gratification you have been the medium of procuring me. '*Theodor Körner's Vater*'—it is indeed a title beautifully expressing all the holy pride which the memory of '*Die treuen Todten*'* must inspire, and awakening every good and high feeling to its sound. I shall prize the lines as a relic. Will you be kind

*The faithful dead.

enough to assure M. Körner, with my grateful respects, of the value which will be attached to them, a value so greatly enhanced by their being in his own hand. They are very beautiful, I think, in their somewhat antique and *treuherzig** simplicity, worthy to have proceeded from '*Theodor Körner's Vater.*' I am very glad that he so fully appreciates your translations, and enters into the spirit of your ideas on his son's works; and sincerely wishing you all success in a career so well begun, I beg you to believe me, dear sir,

"Your much obliged,

"FELICIA HEMANS."

It will be yet more clearly seen, from further portions of Mrs. Hemans' correspondence, with what devotion and gratitude she regarded German literature;—she spoke of its language as "rich and *affectionate*, in which I take much delight:"—how she gratefully referred

* True-hearted.

to its study as having expanded her mind and opened to her new sources of intellectual delight and exercise. For a while, too, she may have been said to have written under the shadow of its mysticism: but this secondary influence had passed away some time before her death. It is not the lot of high minds, though they may pass through and linger in regions where thought loses itself in obscurity, to terminate their career there. The "Lays of many Lands," most of which appeared in the New Monthly Magazine, then edited by Mr. Campbell, were, we are told by herself, suggested by Herder's "*Stimmen der Völker in Liedern.*" Her next volume was formed of a collection of these, preceded by "The Forest Sanctuary."

Mrs. Hemans considered this poem as almost, if not altogether, the best of her works. She would sometimes say, that in proportion to the praise which had been bestowed upon other of her less carefully meditated and shorter compositions, she thought it had hardly met with

its fair share of success: for it was the first continuous effort in which she dared to write from the fulness of her own heart—to listen to the promptings of her genius freely and fearlessly. The subject was suggested by a passage in one of the letters of Don Leucadio Doblado, and was wrought upon by her with that eagerness and fervour which almost *command* corresponding results. I have heard Mrs. Hemans say, that the greater part of this poem was written in no more picturesque a retreat than a laundry, to which, as being detached from the house, she resorted for undisturbed quiet and leisure. When she read it, while in progress, to her mother and sister, they were surprised to tears at the increased power displayed in it. She was not prone to speak with self-contentment of her own works; but, perhaps, *the one* favourite descriptive passage was that picture of a sea burial in the second canto.

. . . . . She lay a thing for earth's embrace,'
To cover with spring-wreaths. For earth's?—the wave

That gives the bier no flowers, makes moan above her grave!

On the mid-seas a knell!—for man was there,—
Anguish and love, the mourner with his dead!
A long, low, tolling knell—a voice of prayer—
Dark glassy waters, like a desert spread,—
And the pale shining Southern Cross on high,
Its faint stars fading from a solemn sky,
Where mighty clouds before the dawn grew red:—
Were these things round me? Such o'er memory sweep
Wildly when aught brings back that burial of the deep.

Then the broad, lonely sunrise, and the plash
Into the sounding waves!—around her head
They parted, with a glancing moment's flash,
Then shut—and all was still. . . . .

The whole poem, whether in its scenes of superstition—the Auto da Fè—the dungeon—the flight, or in its delineation of the mental conflicts of its hero—or in its forest pictures of the free west, which offer such a delicious repose to the mind, is full of happy thoughts and turns of

expression. Four lines of peculiar delicacy and beauty recur to me as I write, too strongly to be passed by. They are from a character of one of the martyr sisters.

> And if she mingled with the festive train,
> It was but as some melancholy star
> Beholds the dance of shepherds on the plain,
> In its bright stillness present, though afar.

But the entire episode of "Queen-like Teresa —radiant Inez"—is wrought up with a nerve and an impulse, which men of renown have failed to reach. The death of the latter, if, perhaps, it be a little too *romantic* for the stern realities of the scene, is so beautifully told, that it cannot be read without strong feeling, nor carelessly remembered. And most beautiful, too, are the sudden out-bursts of thankfulness —of the quick, happy consciousness of liberty with which the narrator of this ghastly sacrifice, interrupts the tale, to reassure himself—

> Spout on, my happy child! for thou art free!

The character of the convert's wife, Leonor,—devotedly clinging to his fortunes, without a reproach or a murmur, while her heart trembles before him, as though she were in the presence of a lost spirit,—is one of those, in which Mrs. Hemans' individual mode of thought and manner of expression are most happily impersonated. As a whole, she was hardly wrong in her own estimate of this poem: and on recently returning to it, I have been surprised to find, how well it bears the tests and trials with which it is only either fit or rational to examine works of the highest order of mind. But here, also, would criticism be impertinent.

The next work of Mrs. Hemans, and the one by which she is most universally known, was the "Records of Woman," published in 1828. In this, to use her own words, "there is more of herself to be found" than in any preceding composition. But even the slightest analysis of these beautiful legends would be superfluous; suffice it to say, that they were not things

of meditation, but imagined and uttered in the same breath; like every line that she wrote, as far as possible from being a studied exercise. It is true, that in some lyrics more than others, her individual feelings are eagerly put forth—in those, for instance, wherein aspirations after another world are expressed, or which breathe the weary pining language of home sickness, or in which she utters her abiding sense of the insufficiency of fame to satisfy a woman's heart, however its possession may gratify her vanity—or wherein she speaks with a passionate self-distrust of her own art, of the impossibility of performance to keep pace with desire. The fervour with which these were poured forth, seriously endangered a frame already undermined by too ardent a spirit, whose consuming work had been aided by a personal self-neglect, childish to wilfulness. So perilously, indeed, was she excited by the composition of Mozart's Requiem, that she was prohibited by her physician from any further exercise of her

art, for some weeks after it was written. Few more genuine out-bursts of feeling have been ever poured forth than the three following verses of that poem.

" Yet I have known it long:
Too restless and too strong
Within this clay hath been the o'ermastering flame;
Swift thought that came and went,
Like torrents o'er me sent
Have shaken as a reed, my thrilling frame.

Like perfumes on the wind,
Which none may stay or bind,
The beautiful comes floating through my soul;
I strive with yearning vain,
The spirit to detain
Of the deep harmonies that past me roll!

Therefore disturbing dreams
Trouble the secret streams,
And founts of music that o'erflow my breast;
Something far more divine
Than may on earth be mine,
Haunts my worn heart, and will not let it rest.

Most of the poems above referred to, were written at Rhyllon; the last and most favourite of Mrs. Hemans' residences at Wales. Some of them will be found coloured by a shadow which had recently passed over her lot—the death of her mother. To this, which she always felt as an irreparable loss, will be found not a few touching allusions in many following letters.

A small woodland dingle, near Rhyllon, was her favourite retreat: here she would spend long summer mornings to read, and project, and compose, while her children played about her. "Whenever one of us brought her a new flower," writes one of them, "she was sure to introduce it into her next poem." She has unconsciously described this haunt over and over again with affectionate distinctness; it is the scene referred to in the "Hour of Romance," and in a sonnet which is printed among her "Poetical Remains."

Still are the cowslips from thy bosom springing,
O far-off grassy dell?—And dost thou see,

When southern winds first wake the vernal singing,
The star-gleam of the wood-anemone?
Doth the shy ring-dove haunt thee yet—the bee
Hang on thy flowers, as when I breathed farewell
To their wild blooms? and round the beechen tree
Still, in green softness, doth the moss-bank swell?"

Many of the imaginations which floated through her brain in this retirement, were lost in the more interrupted and responsible life, which followed Mrs. Hemans' departure from Wales; when the breaking up of her household, on the marriage of one of her family, and the removal of another into Ireland, threw her exclusively upon her own resources, and compelled her to make acquaintance with an "eating, drinking, buying, bargaining" world, with which, from her disposition and habits, she was ill fitted to cope. One of these unfinished works was the "Portrait Gallery," of which one episode, "The Lady of the Castle," is introduced in the "Records."

Before proceeding to a period—which must

have greater interest for the reader, inasmuch as these memorials will more exclusively consist of such as are furnished by Mrs. Hemans' own correspondence—it may be well to allude to the fame which she had already gained in America by her writings. The circulation of these was almost unprecedented; and its influence, as has been already remarked, might be presently traced in the host of imitators that sprung up there. She took an honest and affectionate pleasure in the fame and friendship gained for her by her works on the other side of the Atlantic. The intimacy she formed with Professor Norton must be expressly mentioned, as being lasting and cordial. This gentleman undertook the superintendence of the publication of her works in America; and she justly regarded him to the last as one of her firmest friends. One of the first, if not the very first, of the communications which afterwards became so frequent, was a packet, with a letter of self-introduction containing offers of service which were well borne out

by after performance. This was lost upon the Ulverstone sands by the party to whose charge it had been entrusted; and its contents discovered, drying at a little inn fire, by one who forwarded them to their proper place of destination. Mrs. Hemans prized the letter, and the book which accompanied it—a life of Mr. Charles Eliot—all the more for the vicissitudes they had undergone before reaching her; the book never wholly lost the traces of its submersion. With Dr. Channing, too, she was in the habit of a close and frequent correspondence: it will be seen how highly she valued his lofty cast of thought, and the beautiful holy morality inculcated in his noble writings—by the frequent and almost reverential mention of him in the following letters. And though no two people could differ more strongly in their religious and political views, (if her's indeed may be called *views*, which were, in fact, the involuntary reflections of the opinions of those nearest and dearest to her,) she was of

too generous a nature to be narrowed in her sympathies, by any differences of sect, or party, or nation. For the counsel of Dr. Channing she had the highest possible value; and I have regretted much that I have not permission to enrich my memorials by the letters which passed between them.

It should be told, too, that so general was the interest excited in America, that a most liberal offer of a certain income, and still more, of a friendly welcome, was made to her, in the hope of tempting her to take up her residence in Boston, for the purpose of conducting a periodical. She would smile at her own unfitness for such an undertaking, while she felt with all her heart the flattering and substantial kindness of the proposal. While she was resident in the neighbourhood of Liverpool, she was unceasingly sought out by American visitors. I remember seeing a beautiful girl from New York, as much excited and awe-struck at the

thoughts of being admitted to her presence, as the Lady Fannys and Lady Bettys whom Northcote saw reverentially peeping through the door of the room where England's tragic muse was sitting—"Her friends at home," said she, "would think so much of her, for having seen Mrs. Hemans." Some of the intrusions and offers of service to which this American reputation led, were, it is true, whimsical enough. One lady beset her, with a frame of family miniatures in hand, and, on parting with her, and remonstrating with her on the melancholy tone of her poems, begged leave to introduce a substitute who would act in her absence as a counsellor and cheering influence; and, to use her own phrase, might be relied upon—as a "perfect walking-stick of friendship." But such strange homage was any thing but exclusively transatlantic; few, indeed, who have led a life so retired have been more buzzed about by the insect swarm, who love to make an idle noise in the neigh-

bourhood of the gifted, than Mrs. Hemans. The next chapter will treat of something far more genuine than such empty and capricious adulation.

CHAPTER IV.

Memorials of Mrs. Hemans' female friendships—Letters to Mrs. Joanna Baillie—Letters to Miss Mitford—Letter to Mrs. Howitt—Miss Jewsbury—Brief notice of her life and writings—First introduction to Wordsworth's Poems—Correspondence between Mrs. Hemans and Miss Jewsbury.

MRS. HEMANS had now taken her place in the circle of living poets, as one who possessed powers and feelings and peculiarities of her own. The world had recognised an original mind, speaking in the perfect music of her verse:—had perceived that the Spirit of romance and chivalry had found another incarnation, although, being this time clothed in a female

form, it was united with affections deeper, if less strikingly picturesque, than mere devotion to beauty, or mere fidelity to the knightly vow of valour and courtesy. In like manner, at a later period, has the homely domestic ballad, by passing into female hands, been revived in all its plainness and pathos, without any of the grossness, which, of old, stained its strength. An eloquent modern critic (Mrs. Jameson) has rightly said that Mrs. Hemans' poems "could not have been written by a man."—Their love is without selfishness—their passion pure from sensual coarseness—their high heroism (and as instances may be mentioned, among many, "The Switzer's Wife," and the "Lady of Provence,") unsullied by any base alloy of ambition. In their religion, too, she is essentially womanly—fervent, trustful, unquestioning, "hoping on, hoping ever"—in spite of a painfully acute consciousness of the peculiar trials of her sex—of that lot, so beautifully described in one of her lyrics, which is

. . . . . silent tears to weep,
And patient smiles to wear through suffering's hour,
And sumless riches from affection's deep,
To pour on withered reeds—a wasted shower,—
And to make idols, and to find them clay,
And to bewail that worship . . . . . .

It was about this time, then, that the literary friendships of Mrs. Hemans began to grow more numerous. She might now claim the companionship of the gifted. But in all her advances and answers, she will be found self-distrustful, open, with a child-like gratitude, to words of kindness and encouragement,—seeking rather sympathy than praise. The following letters, all addressed to correspondents of her own sex, like herself distinguished in the literary world, give so fair a picture of her mind in all its *womanliness*, as to make further preface or analysis superfluous. The very repetitions they contain have a significance, as evidencing the closeness with which pure thoughts and gracious feelings were woven into the tissue of her daily life.

TO MISS BAILLIE.

"Rhyllon, April 8th.

"My dear Madam,

"I have received and read with much pleasure the little tract with which you have so kindly favoured me, and which I cannot but think, from its persuasive tone, and simple appeal at once to the highest motives by which our nature is capable of being actuated, eminently calculated to be useful. I have made my own children read it, although, I thank Heaven, none of them have dispositions at all requiring such admonition; but I wish to bring them acquainted with *you*, my dear madam,—some of whose works they have already read,—in the amiable character of a teacher of the poor. The remark made by one of them I think will please you,—'How very good it was, mamma, of the lady who wrote 'Ethwald,' to write this!' I shall send out two of these little tracts for my American friends, to whom, I doubt not, the same idea will occur, though it may be expressed in

more eloquent language; and the other shall be given to the friends of the national school here. I am exceedingly glad to find that you are so much pleased with the writings of Dr. Channing. The discourse you mention, on the Evidences of Christianity, I have always considered as one of his most powerful productions, and I rejoice that by your influence its usefulness is likely to be so far extended. Its author will, I know, be highly gratified by this intelligence, which I shall communicate to him when I next write. He is an Unitarian, and, as you will observe from his Essay on Milton, a zealous advocate of that cause; but surely there is enough in the path which we all tread together, to make us feel that we are 'the children of one Father,' and to prevent our allowing differences of opinion to divide our hearts. You are very kind to take so much pleasure in the approbation with which my writings seem to be honoured. Such praise will ever be valuable, yet it comes to me now mingled with something of mournfulness,

for the ear to which it ever brought the greatest delight has recently been closed. The last winter deprived me of my truest and tenderest friend—the mother by whose unwearied spirit of love and hope I was encouraged to bear on through all the obstacles which beset my onward path. I have had much to contend with, and often have I thought, and often, perhaps, may I yet have to think of your own affecting lines,

> When the world looks cold and surly on us,
> Where can we turn to meet a warmer eye,
> With such sure confidence as to *a mother's*?

But I ought to apologize for troubling you thus with my own sorrows. I will do so, and my apology shall be, that the kindly warmth of heart which seems to breathe over all your writings, and the power of early association over my mind, make me feel, whenever I address you, as if I were writing to a friend. With the sincerest respect, believe me, dear Madam,

"Your truly obliged,

"Felicia Hemans."

TO MISS BAILLIE.

"Rhyllon, May 31st, 1827.

"My dear Madam,

"Your last letter afforded me a gratification for which I most sincerely thank you. I delight to think that I have passed the bounds of a *mere* literary correspondence, and may, I hope, address you as a friend. My children were much pleased by your kind mention of them; the one who had been reading Ethwald with such interest, was not a little amused to find himself designated *as a girl:* I have none but boys; a circumstance I often am inclined to regret; for I married so young that they are even now beginning to spring from childhood into youth themselves, and in the course of a few years I must expect that they will long for, and be launched into, another world than the green fields in which they are now contented to play around me. Let me, however, be thankful for the happiness I at present enjoy, and for the privilege which peculiar circumstances have

afforded me, and which is granted to so few mothers, of being able myself to superintend their education, and give what I hope will be enduring impressions to their minds. Now that I am upon this subject, dear madam, I am strongly tempted to relate a little anecdote, which I think will interest you—mammas are always prone to believe their children *must* be interesting—of one of them at eleven years old. I had been reading to him Lord Byron's magnificent address to the sea—

'Roll on, thou deep and dark blue ocean,—roll!'

He listened in almost breathless attention, and exclaimed, the moment I had finished it, "It is very grand, indeed!—but how much finer it would have been, mamma, if he had said at the close, that God had measured out all those waters with the hollow of his hand!" I really could not help being struck with the true wisdom thus embodied in the simplicity of childhood.

"You say, my dear madam, that you wish you had something to send me. May I, thus emboldened, ask you for something which I have long wished to possess, but not been able to procure, as I believe it is at present out of print,—your delightful little drama of the "Beacon?"—or perhaps you can guide me as to where I may meet with it. I have an edition of your works, containing the Plays on the Passions, (with the exception of Orra,) Ethwald, Rayner, and Constantine; and I have the "Family Legend" separate, but the "Beacon" I have not met with since I read it almost in childhood, and made some extracts from it, which would amuse you if you could see them in the school-girl hand of fourteen or fifteen. That heart-cheering song,

'The absent will return,—the long, long lost be found!'

I remember being more especially pleased with; it breathes such a spirit of hope and joy; and I am by nature inclined to both, though early

cares have chastened and subdued a mind, perhaps but too ardent originally.

"I have another favour to request; it is the permission to dedicate to you, of whose name my whole sex may be proud, a work which I shall probably publish in the course of this present year, and which is to be called 'Records of Woman.' If you do not object to this, I will promise that the inscription shall be as simple as you could desire. I very much wish to bring out the book in Edinburgh, provided my friends can make desirable arrangements for me with any of the publishers there; but I hope you will allow me to offer you, whether in your own country or mine, this little token of unfeigned respect.

"I mentioned to you, in my last letter, the dear and excellent mother of whom I have been deprived; the truly kind feeling with which you allude to the subject encourages me to send you a few lines, which possess a value in my eyes from their having been the last poetry of

mine she was permitted to enjoy. I read them to her, by her bed side, about three weeks before I was deprived of her; and as the tender pleasure with which she heard them has rendered them to me 'a thing set apart,' I mean not to publish them, and they will be new to you.* They were written for a very interesting Scotch family of the name of Lyndsay.

"One of the little tracts with which you have favoured me, I lately sent to Lady ———, with whom I almost think you must be acquainted. She values it highly, and said of it, in a letter I lately received from her, 'What a delightful trait, in a really *great* mind, to have produced such a thing!' You have made me feel so much at my ease when I write to you, my dear madam, that the only danger seems to be lest my letters should outrun all bounds of moderation: it is so pleasant to write as if one were talking by the

* The lines in question, "A Domestic Scene," were afterwards published among the "Hymns for Childhood."

fireside in winter, or on some quiet garden-seat in summer-time. I must, however, have done at last, assuring you how faithfully and respectfully,

"I am yours,

"FELICIA HEMANS."

TO MISS BAILLIE.

"April 12th, 1828.

"My dear Madam,

"It seems very long since I have had the pleasure of any communication with you; but this privation has been my own fault, or rather my misfortune; for a good deal of illness during the winter compelled me to give up all other occupation, for that particularly uninteresting one—taking care of myself, or rather allowing others to take care of me. I know not how it is, but I always feel so ashamed of the apparent egotism and selfishness attendant on indisposition—the muffling one's self up, taking the

warmest place, shrinking from the mirthful noises of those who are full of health, &c. &c.—that I believe I am apt to fall into the contrary extreme, and so, in the end, to occasion ten times more trouble than I should have done with a little proper submission." But a truce with the remembrances of indisposition, now that the spring is really come forth with all her singing-birds and violets: it seems as if sadness had no right to a place amongst the bright and fair things of the season.

"I am now expecting very soon to hear from my American friends, in reply to the packet which contained your dispatches for them, and will not fail to write as soon as I receive any communication from Professor Norton for you. Dr. Channing has lately published a very noble essay on the character of Napoleon, occasioned by Sir Walter Scott's Life of that dazzling, but most *unheroic* personage. I wish you may meet with it; I am sure that the lofty thoughts embodied by its writer, in his own fervid eloquence,

could not fail to delight you; and his high views of moral beauty are really freshening to the heart, which longs to pour itself forth in love and admiration, and finds so little in the every-day world whereon such feelings may repose.

"The little volume, 'Records of Woman,' which you kindly gave me permission to inscribe to you, is now in the press, and I hope I shall soon be able to send you a copy; and that the dedication, which is in the simplest form, will be honoured by your approval. Mr. Blackwood is its publisher. I do not know whether you may have heard of the interest which Sir Walter Scott has latterly most kindly taken in some music of my sister's composition, accompanying words of mine. One song in particular, 'The Captive Knight,' struck him as being '*si chevaleresque*,' to use his own word on the occasion, that he has been quite bent on its publication, and it will in consequence be brought out and dedicated to him. I think you may, perhaps, like to see the poetry of it, which I inclose for

you. I am to lose this, my only sister,—indeed I may almost say, my only companion,—very shortly: she is about to change her name and home, and remove very far from me. O how many deaths there are in the world for the affections!" . . . .

TO MISS MITFORD.

"Rhyllon, St. Asaph, June 6th, 1827.

"Madam,

"I can hardly feel that I am addressing an entire stranger in the author of 'Our Village,' and yet I know it is right and proper, that I should apologize for the liberty I am taking. But, really after having accompanied you again, and again, as I have done, in 'violetting' and seeking for wood-sorrel: after having been with you to call upon Mrs. Allen in 'the dell,' and becoming thoroughly acquainted with 'May and Lizzy,' I cannot but hope, that you will

kindly pardon my intrusion, and that my name may be sufficiently known to you to plead my cause. There are some writers whose works we cannot read without feeling as if we really *had* looked with them upon the scenes they bring before us, and as if such communion had almost given us a claim to something more than the mere intercourse between author and 'gentle reader.' Will you allow me to say that *your* writings have this effect upon me, and that you have taught me in making me know and love your 'Village' so well, to wish for further knowledge, also, of *her* who has so vividly impressed its dingles and copses upon my imagination, and peopled them so cheerily with healthful and happy beings? I believe, if I could be personally introduced to you, that I should in less than five minutes begin to enquire about Lucy, and the lilies of the valley, and whether you had succeeded in peopling that shady border in your own territories 'with those shy flowers.' My boys, the con-

stant companions of my walks, about *our* village, and along our two pretty rivers, the Elwy and the Clwyd, are not less interested in your gipsies' young and old, your heroes of the cricket ground, and above all—Jack Hatch! —woeful and amazed did they all look, when it was found that Jack Hatch could die! But I really must come to the aim and object of this letter, which I fear you may almost begin to look upon as 'prose run mad.' I dare say you laugh sometimes, as I am inclined to do myself, at the prevailing mania for autographs: but a very kind friend of mine in a distant country does no such thing, and I am making a collection for him, which I should think, (and he, too, I am sure) very much enriched by your name. If you do me the favour to comply with this request, it will give me great pleasure to hear from you, under cover to the Bishop of Asaph, to whom I should have sent this letter to be franked, but, that being ignorant of your

address, I am obliged to entrust it to a bookseller in town.

"With sincere esteem,

"I beg you to believe me, Madam,

"Your faithful servant,

"FELICIA HEMANS."

"Rhyllon, St. Asaph, July 16th, 1827.

"My dear Miss Mitford,

"A thousand thanks to you for your kind and frank letter, so like what I should have expected from you, and what I *did* expect, that I almost wonder I was not disappointed, for how seldom are our expectations on which one has loved to dwell fully realized! I bestow this *truism* upon you, under the immediate influence of disappointed feeling, having arranged for myself a very pleasant walk yesterday evening, and having been *way-laid* and prevented from going, so

I am naturally disposed to moralize a little in consequence. I hope your '*Maying*' was not frustrated in a similar manner, but that a living and breathing picture of it may one day be presented to me in one of your delightful village sketches. The last of these, that I read, (Whitsun Eve,) made me long to sit with you, 'under that dark bower, watching the bee-bird;' I was very glad to meet with my old friend May, in the same piece; I really feared she had been gathered to her fathers, and succeeded by 'Mossy,' with whom lately I became acquainted, and next to 'an old familiar face,' one misses, I think, an old familiar *name*, which has made for itself a nestling place in one's imagination. I had the pleasure of passing a very agreeable evening lately with ——— and his family, who were passing through St. Asaph, and visited me on their way; I found that he was in correspondence with you, though not personally acquainted; I wished I could have

drawn you hither on a piece of Prince Houssein's precious tapestry, to join us in a walk we all took together, and during which we talked much of you and your writings. He had two sweet daughters with him; the younger, a fair quiet and thoughtful looking creature, reminded me at once, of the 'Pride of Lammermoor,' and of your own Ellen in the 'Sisters:'—is not that pretty story of Charlotte and Ellen Page, called 'The Sisters?' I have not the book near me at this moment. Would any thing tempt you, my dear Miss Mitford, or is it within the bounds of possibility that you could be induced to visit me at St. Asaph? The most cordial reception I could promise you, and you would find here new scenes, new people with many marked peculiarities (for the Welsh character is by no means yet merged in the English,) on which to exercise your powers. I wish you would think of it, and bring May with you, and we will have rambles and nut-gatherings and sketching

parties to your heart's content. I beg my best compliments to your father, and am,

"With esteem,

"Very faithfully yours,

"FELICIA HEMANS."

"I must not forget to thank you for that pretty and *joyous* song; it was just the autograph I should have desired for my friend. I hope you will sometimes let me hear from you. You will confer a great pleasure, whenever you may be inclined to write."

The song in question,—"And art thou come back safe again," was afterwards printed in the fifth volume of "Our Village." The note which there accompanies it, gave Mrs. Hemans a degree of pleasure, "which nothing of mere compliment could have inspired her with. She had always," continues her sister, to whom I am indebted for this notice, "the most appreciating admiration of Miss Mitford's style of writing—her

beautiful pictures of rural life, and fine old English feelings; and latterly, when through the silence and darkness of her sick room, her own love of nature, more intense than ever, 'haunted her like a passion,' she used to tell me how often some of the sweet scenes of 'Our Village,' rose in visions before her. It had been one of her plans, too, to write a little volume of prose sketches, chiefly consisting of recollections of her childhood, and descriptions of scenes that had struck her in after-life, and this volume she meant to dedicate to Miss Mitford."

"St. Asaph, March 23rd, 1828.

"My dear Miss Mitford,

"I ought long since to have thanked you for your very kind letter, although it brought disappointment with it, in the conviction that I must not hope to see you here. You are happy in having such reasons to assign, for the difficulty of your leaving home; every day impresses more forcibly on my mind the truth and

the full meaning of Gray's remark, '*We can have but one mother*;' it is now about a year since I have been deprived of mine, and will you think me weak when I tell you that I shed tears over your letter, from the idea of the pleasure it would have given her? I am sure that you will agree with me, that fame can only afford *reflected* delight to a woman. Do you know that I often think of you, and the happiness you must feel in being able to run to your father and mother, with all the praises you receive. For me that joy is past; but I will not write in sadness to her whose writings have often thrown sunshine over my own variable spirits. How are all my old friends of 'Our Village?' Lizzy and Lucy and May, and the pleasant people at the 'Vicarage,' and the merry men of the cricket-ground? do tell me something of them all. I became acquainted with your delightful bird-catcher last month, and have only to hope that you were not the worse for that fog in which you encountered him, and the very *description* of which

almost took my hair out of curl whilst reading it. Your autograph, which I transmitted to my American friends, was very gratefully received,—and is enshrined in a book amidst I know not how many other 'bright names;' for aught I know, Washington himself may be there, side by side with you; and not improbably *is*, for they are going to send me an original letter of his, which I shall prize much. If you are likely soon to pay one of your flying visits to London, I should very much like you to see my portrait, for which I sat a few months since; I am sure you will understand *why* I wish you to see it; it would be giving me something of a personal introduction to one whom I esteem so highly. The picture is at the rooms of the artist, Mr. West, 63, Margaret Street, Cavendish Square: it is considered a very striking likeness. I am about to publish a little volume, called 'Records of Woman,' of which I shall beg your acceptance: I have put my heart and individual feelings into it more than any thing

else I have written; but, whether it will interest my friends more for this reason, remains to be seen. May I offer my kindest respects to your father and mother, and beg you to believe me,

"Dear Miss Mitford,

"Very faithfully yours,

"FELICIA HEMANS."

TO MRS. HOWITT.

"Rhyllon, May 12th, 1828.

"My dear Mrs. Howitt,

"It will I assure you give me very cordial pleasure to see you here, and for more, I hope, than one day, if convenient to yourself. I am about to leave home for a short time, but shall be back the first week in June, any time after which that may suit yourself, your visit will be most acceptable to me. You will, I imagine, be accompained by your husband to whom pray offer my kind regards and assurance of friendly welcome.

"I can feel deeply for the sorrow you communicate to me; it is one which Heaven has yet graciously spared me; but the imagination within us is a fearful and mysterious power, and has often brought all the sufferings of that particular bereavement before me, with a vividness from which I have shrunk almost in foreboding terror. And I have felt, too, (though not through the breaking of *that* tie,) those sick and weary yearnings for the dead, that feverish *thirst* for the sound of a departed voice or step, in which the heart seems to die away, and literally to become '*a fountain of tears.*' Who can sound its depths? One alone, and may He comfort you!

"When you write to Mr. Bernard Barton, with whom most probably you are in frequent communication, will you mention, with my kind regards, that many months of languishing health have caused the interruption in my correspondence with him, but that I am now reviving, and hope shortly to resume it. I sent a copy of your delightful little volume, 'The Desola-

tion of Eyam,' a short time since, to some very intelligent friends whom I am fortunate enough to possess in America, they will, I know, be able to appreciate all its feeling and beauty. With unfeigned satisfaction in the prospect of so soon making your acquaintance, believe me to be,

"Very faithfully yours,

"FELICIA HEMANS."

But of all Mrs. Hemans' literary friends, one must be singled out for especial mention: both for the warm and energetic heartiness of regard displayed by her in a long and unbroken intimacy, and because her brilliant talents and high worth have passed away without receiving the honour or exciting the regret which they deserved. This was Miss Jewsbury, of whose life and writings a passing notice cannot be unwelcome.

The events of the former were not many, nor of any extraordinary importance. It is enough to say, that she was a native of Warwickshire; that, during her youth, her family removed to Manchester, in which town she continued to reside till her marriage with the Rev. William Fletcher. She accompanied this gentleman to India, where he had received an appointment, and within a few months after landing there, died of the cholera on the way from Sholapore to Bombay, on the 3rd of October, 1833, at the age of thirty-two or thirty-three years.

Few have been more strenuous in the task of mental self-cultivation than Miss Jewsbury. She too, like her friend, was early called upon to bear the burden of capricious and uncertain health, so often the heritage of those in whom "the spirit speaks loud." And to this was added the responsibility of managing a large family, confided to her upon the death of her mother. If she cannot absolutely be said to have pursued knowledge

under serious difficulties, she had at least no encouragement in her progress, save the energy of her own resolution 'to achieve distinction.' "I was nine years old," she says, in a long letter of counsel and confession lying before me, "when the ambition of writing a book, being praised publicly, and associating with authors, seized me as a vague longing. As I grew older, it took permanence and led to effort. I sat up at nights, dreamed dreams, and schemed schemes. My life after eighteen became so painfully, laboriously domestic, that it was an absolute duty to crush intellectual tastes. I not only did not know a single author, but I did not know a single person of superior mind,—I did not even know how wretchedly deficient my own cultivation was. I wrote and wrote, and wrote faster than I can now, and without a tenth part of the timidity. I was twenty-one before I gained any desire for knowledge, as the natural road to the emancipation I craved; this was consequent on forming a friendship with two in-

dividuals, not writers, but highly gifted; they suggested study to me, and by their conversation, awoke me to a sense of my own deficiency. My domestic occupations continued as laborious as ever. I could neither read nor write legitimately till the day was over. It is not needful to say how premature ambition and energy developed themselves: suffice it to say, that the path of literature was opened to me when I least expected it."

Such are her own words, and their sincerity may well be relied upon. It may be added, as a trait of character, that one of the first steps taken by her after her mind was awakened, was to write to Mr. Wordsworth, stating the strong desires which consumed her; and entreating his counsel. It is most honourable to both parties to say, that this letter led to a friendship which was only closed by her death; and the poet has left in his last published volume a few words respecting her, almost as simple as a monumental inscription, but conveying a tribute

as true as it is valuable. "Her enthusiasm," he says, "was ardent, her piety steadfast, and her great talents would have enabled her to be eminently useful in the path to which she had been called. The opinion she entertained of her own performances given to the world under her maiden name, was modest and humble, and, indeed, far below her merits, as is often the case with those who are making trial of their powers to discover what they are best fit for. In one quality—quickness in the motions of her mind—she was in the author's estimation unrivalled."

Miss Jewsbury appeared in the world of authorship at a time, and in a manner of all others, least favourable to the permanence of a literary reputation. She was first known by her contributions to annuals and the smaller periodicals; her brightest thoughts were broken up into fragments, and many of them given to the world anonymously: but in all that she wrote may be discerned something of the unwearied study, and unflagging zeal, and unswerv-

ing principle, which raised even her most trifling efforts above the spurious tone of the light literature just then so fashionable. In her writings too, even when least carefully finished, will be found an ingenuity of illustration and a grace of language which are too often employed to conceal the absence of fixed principle, or the deficiency of observation. Her collected works are few, the earliest of them being the "Phantasmagoria," a series of light essays and tales. To this, succeeded her "Letters to the Young," which were written under the abiding influence of deep religious impressions, upon her recovery from a severe illness. These were shortly followed by the "Three Histories," the most complete of her works, though even this must be looked upon as a promise rather than a performance, and by her "Lays for Leisure Hours." But her best compositions remain unedited and neglected, some of them buried in obscure places; and a collection of her sketches and letters and critical essays would be a valuable

addition to our stores of female literature. Many of the last appeared in the Athenæum, during the years 1831 and 1832; and it is with permission that I extract from that periodical the following fragments of a letter, written shortly before Mrs. Fletcher left England, which have a melancholy interest, as completing the picture of a mind of no common order.

". . . I can bear blame if seriously given, and accompanied by that general justice which I feel due to me; banter is that which I *cannot* bear, and the prevalence of which in passing criticism, and the dread of which in my own person, greatly contributes to my determination of letting many years elapse before I write another book."

"Unfortunately, I was twenty-one before I became a reader, and I became a writer almost as soon; it is the ruin of all young talent of the day, that reading and writing are simultaneous. We do not educate ourselves for literary enterprise. Some never awake to the conscious-

ness of the better things neglected; and if one, like myself, is at last seized upon by a blended passion for knowledge and for truth, he has probably committed himself by a series of jejune efforts,—the standard of inferiority is erected, and the curse of mere cleverness clings to his name. I would gladly burn *almost* every thing I ever wrote, if so be that I might start now with a mind that has seen, read, thought, and suffered, something at least approaching to a preparation. Alas! alas! we all sacrifice the palm-tree to obtain the temporary draught of wine! We slay the camel that would bear us through the desert, because we will not endure a momentary thirst.

"*I have done nothing to live*, and what I have yet done must pass away with a thousand other blossoms, the growth, the beauty, and oblivion of a day. The powers which I feel, and of which I have given promise, *may* mature, *may* stamp themselves in act, but the spirit of despondency is strong upon the future exile, and I fear they never will,

"I feel the long grass growing o'er my heart.

"My 'Three Histories,' have most of myself in them, but they are fragmentary. Public report has fastened the 'Julia,' upon me; the childhood, the opening years, and many of the after opinions are correct; but all else is fabulous.

"In the best of every thing I have done, you will find one leading idea—*death*; all thoughts, all images, all contrasts of thoughts and images, are derived from living much in the valley of that shadow; from having *learned* life rather in the vicissitudes of man than of woman, from the mind being *Hebraic*. My poetry, except some ha'f-dozen pieces, may be consigned to oblivion; but in all you would find the sober hue, which to my mind's eye, blends equally with the golden glow of sunset, and the bright green of spring, and is seen equally in the 'temple of delight' as in the tomb of decay and separation. I am melancholy by nature, cheerful by principle." . . .

Enough has been said to indicate the contrast

of mind between Miss Jewsbury and her friend; their intimate communion was as honourable as it was profitable to both parties, from the affectionate terms on which it was maintained. It *must*, indeed, always be profitable for high minds, diversely gifted, to mingle. They corresponded freely on subjects of common interest: they spent many long and pleasant periods of time together, wherein Mrs. Hemans would enrich and mellow the quick and naturally somewhat harsher mind of the other, by pouring forth all those stores of imagination, which were never withheld from those who could value them, —while her guest would sometimes playfully exercise her great natural powers of reasoning which had been strengthened by the responsibilities and difficulties of her youth, to call back her fanciful friend, if she had wandered into cloud-land, too far from the homely realities of life. The distinction between the two was, in short, that the one came through Thought to Poetry, the other through Poetry to Thought.

But no more perfect illustration of the friendship between these two gifted women could be given, than is to be found in the two letters subjoined.

MRS. HEMANS TO MISS JEWSBURY.

"The inclosed lines,* an effusion of deep and sincere admiration, will give you some idea of the enjoyment, and, I hope I may say, advantage, which you have been the means of imparting, by so kindly entrusting me with your precious copy of Wordsworth's Miscellaneous Poems. It has opened to me such a treasure of thought and feeling, that I shall always

* These were the stanzas addressed to the poet:

"Thine is a strain to read among the hills," &c. &c.

So many allusions will be found in after portions of these memorials of the increasing delight and reverence with which Mrs. Hemans regarded the poetry of Wordsworth, that it is needless here to dwell further upon the subject.

associate your name with some of my pleasantest recollections, as having introduced me to the knowledge of what I can only regret should have been so long a 'Yarrow unvisited.' I would not write to you sooner, because I wished to tell you that I had really *studied* these poems, and they have been the daily food of my mind ever since I borrowed them. There is hardly any scene of a happy, though serious, domestic life, or any mood of a reflective mind, with the spirit of which some one or other of them does not beautifully harmonize. This author is the true *Poet of Home*, and of all the lofty feelings which have their root in the soil of home affections. His fine sonnets to Liberty, and indeed, all his pieces which have any reference to political interest, remind me of the spirit in which Schiller has conceived the character of William Tell, a calm, single-hearted herdsman of the hills, breaking forth into fiery and indignant eloquence, when the sanctity of his hearth is invaded. Then, what power Wordsworth con-

denses into single lines, like Lord Byron's 'curdling a long life into one hour.'

'The still sad music of humanity.'—

'The river glideth at his own sweet will'—

'Over his own sweet voice the stock-dove broods.'—

And a thousand others, which we must some time, (and I hope not a very distant one,) talk over together. Many of these lines quite haunt me, and I have a strange feeling, as if I must have known them in my childhood, they come over me so like old melodies. I can hardly speak of *favourites* among so many things that delight me, but I think 'The Narrow Glen,' the lines on 'Corra Linn,' the 'Song for the Feast of Brougham Castle,' 'Yarrow visited,' and 'The Cuckoo,' are among those which take hold of imagination the soonest, and recur most frequently to memory. * * I know not how I can have so long omitted to mention the 'Ecclesiastical Sketches,' which I have read, and

do constantly read with deep interest. Their beauty grows upon you and develops as you study it, like that of the old pictures by the Italian masters. My sister, who shares the feelings with which I write, desires I will not fail to ask if you can throw any light for us on the piece of 'The Danish Boy.' Its poetry is beautiful, but the subject requires explanation; does it refer to any wild mountain legend of the 'Land of Lakes?' I had many more things to say respecting all that I have thought and felt during the perusal of these works, but my interruptions, consisting of morning visits from the Bishop down to the tailor of the diocese (which latter guest, to the mother of five boys, is by no means an unimportant one), have been incessant, to say nothing of the boys themselves. My mother being unwell, and my sister engaged, all the duties of politeness have devolved upon me for the day. I must, in a future letter, name to you, according to your wish, a few books, the perusal of which may be advantageous to you,

though I can sincerely say that I should be far from discovering the deficiencies which you imagine in yourself, from any thing I have seen in your writings. I cannot help, however, mentioning, as works from which I have derived much clear and general information, those of Sismondi; in particular his 'Littérature du Midi,' and 'Républiques Italiennes,' but you are probably acquainted with both. I regret that I should have been obliged to answer your interesting letter in so hurried, and, I fear, incoherent a manner, and hope it will not prevent your writing to me again; and believe me, with unfeigned esteem, my dear Miss Jewsbury,

"Your sincere friend,

"F. HEMANS."

It will be seen that the preceding letter was written at a very early period of the acquaintance. A long space intervenes between its date and that of the following, which has been selected from among a large number of letters, as being one

of those most characteristic of the writer. It was addressed to Mrs. Hemans on the occasion of her leaving Wales—a step she was induced to take by the breaking up of her establishment on her sister's marriage, and her brother's removal into Ireland. Miss Jewsbury had paid her a long visit in the course of the summer; and had only recently returned home.

"My dear Mrs. Hemans,

"I fear I am what your sister would call morbidly disposed, for I do not cordially settle to anything that has not reference to *you!* But, of course, you will not quarrel with me on this account; and so, if I write you extravagant and extravagantly long letters, you will judge them and their writer by intention and motive. And I *feel* that you are sad, and I know that you are lonely, and by the time this reaches you,

> "'Wishes, vain as mine, may be
> All that is left to comfort thee!'

But my hopes are strong for the future. So

cheer up, or rather believe that you will cheer up—'Heaviness may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.' 'At even-time there shall be light.' 'There was *One*, and in Him the hope of the world was created, who said in extremity of anguish, 'My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death,'—emphasize that '*My*' and see what force it gives, and then, as an old poet says,

"'Hang all your golden hopes upon his arm.'

* * * "I thank you greatly for your last —I thank you for not exerting yourself to be cheerful; pray always tell me the worst both as to mind and body: the sorrow of sympathy is not the sorrow that breaks the heart, but the sorrow of selfishness; and as I am greatly tempted to selfishness, do not scruple taxing my sympathy. I beg you will not answer this till you get settled in Liverpool. I shall not wait for an answer, but may probably write again soon. I shall think of you most anxiously, so that if

Miss —— would be your substitute, and announce your safe landing in a note, I should feel much relieved, and shall feel as if I knew her. For myself, I am in a state of *unrest.* I cannot settle just at present. I miss my imaginative associations, and do not, like Mr. Dangle in the Critic, greatly like this being 'looked up to.' I don't like having to lock up my similes, to mould my opinions in a more practical form, and find my favourite books lightly esteemed. Amongst my friends I have plenty of intellect in the *raw material,* but I have got a taste for it in an imaginative state. I am not satisfied with silk in the cocoon, I must have it wrought up into Persian stuffs. And then the music! * * * * In fact I believe I am very conceited, though duly gratified by the unfeigned rejoicing manifested by numbers on account of my return. The town is *mad,* no other word will do, touching this Festival. Such displays of finery in the shops! such placards! such advertisements! such buying, selling, scheming, rid-

ing, walking, talking, debating, all on this one subject! Such a medley of building, joining buildings, making Turkish tents and Turkish draperies, and every-land costumes—tailors and milliners monarchs of the day—and such a medley of the Messiah, the Creation, concerts and balls;—charity the avowed, amusement the real object, and poor religion the cloak. I hear so much of devotional feelings and fancy dresses, that I cannot tell one from the other, and when I see the position of The Messiah on the placards thus,

MISCELLANEOUS CONCERT,

MESSIAH,

FANCY DRESS BALL,

I always think of the two malefactors! I shall leave the town in the course of the week, and only entreat that I may hear *nothing* on the subject,—neither the feud for, nor the feud against, nor the feud neutral! In all my reading I now associate you. I think would you enjoy this or that—and so I keep a habit I do

not wish to lose—the habit of looking for beauty. I met with an anecdote the other day that made me think of you. It was the death of a little, and a pious child in India, of the hydrophobia: a death one would think subversive of every thing pleasing. In one of the intervals when he was free from the spasms, he called to his mother for some flowers—she gave him some—but separating his favourite from all the others, he said, 'I only want the rose, mamma.' * * * * * I would I could shake myself free from my associations, I should be happier—at present it is an effort of principle to be cheerful. I pine after the flowers, and that sky of earth, the green meadow-land, and your sister's music and your imagination. The sun seems shining to waste, when he only shines upon streets of houses and bustle. This *is* morbid, but I do pine on my sofa here." * * * *

CHAPTER IV.

Personal recollections of Mrs. Hemans—Her appearance described—Familiar correspondence—"A Thought of the Rose"—Retzsch's Outlines—Ghost Stories—Mozart and Rossini—Montgomery—Her departure from Wales.

I HAVE now reached the period when my own personal acquaintance with Mrs. Hemans commenced. During the height of the 'Annual' fever, chance had thrown the editorship of one of those gay little ephemera into the hands of a member of our family;—of course she was among the persons first applied to for countenance and co-operation. How warmly and efficiently these were given, and continued and extended to other

projects and pursuits, is a thing never to be forgotten. They had a double value, too, as being granted by one so celebrated as she was, to those so obscure and inexperienced as ourselves. But this is not a subject to be dwelt upon, though its mention was indispensable to the clear understanding of the following correspondence. The exchange of a letter or two led to a personal introduction—Mrs. Hemans happening about that time to be on a visit in our neighbourhood. It is not straining the truth to say, that the friendship was made in an hour, and only closed with her life.

I may, perhaps, be forgiven for alluding to the feelings which accompanied me into the presence of almost the first distinguished literary person I had ever seen: one, too, whose writings I loved, as only the very young love the poetry which they have taken to their hearts. After-life has no such moments of mingled delight and misgiving. When I first saw Mrs. Hemans, she was slowly walking with another lady, down

the avenue belonging to the house where she was upon a visit. Her face, her dress, her air, are before me, as I write, like things of yesterday. Yet though so clear is my memory now, I was then so confused, as, upon my return home, to give a most strangely incorrect account of her appearance, and even, I believe, to fall into the ludicrous exaggeration of describing her fine auburn hair as red! In that brief interview, however, one common taste disclosed itself—a fondness, I might say, a passion for music. She spoke with enthusiasm of the many admirable descriptions of its effects to be found in the works of our great writers, themselves not remarkable for any extraordinary attachment to the art—in particular of one passage in Valerius, which I had long treasured,—that which describes the Roman soldiers, at the door of the prison where the Christian captives are confined, listening to their evening hymn, and speaking of the music "which they had heard played many a night, with hautboy and clarion and dulcimer,

upon the high walls of Jerusalem, while the old city was beleaguered." She repeated the rest of that fine passage. "I never heard any music like the music of the Jews;—why, when they came down to join the battle, their trumpets sounded so gloriously that we wondered how it was possible for them ever to be driven back: and then, when their gates were closed, and they sent out to beg their dead, they would play such solemn, awful notes of lamentation, that the plunderers stood still to listen, and their warriors were delivered to them with their mail as they had fallen." There is no free-masonry so intimate and immediate, I believe, as that which exists among the lovers of music; and though, when we parted, I could not tell the colour of her eyes and hair, I felt that a confidence and a good understanding had arisen between us, which the discussion of no subject less fascinating could have excited.

Perhaps this is the place wherein a few words upon the delicate points of external appearance

and manner may come best. It has been said that no woman can form a fair estimate of another's personal attractions; but in contradiction to this sweeping assertion, I shall draw upon a woman's work, "The Three Histories," for a description of Mrs. Hemans, which, though somewhat idealized, is as faithful to the truth as it is gracefully written.

"Egeria was totally different from any other woman I had ever seen, either in Italy or England. She did not dazzle—she subdued me. Other women might be more commanding, more versatile, more acute; but I never saw one so exquisitely feminine. She was lovely without being beautiful; her movements were features; and if a blind man had been privileged to pass his hand over the silken length of hair, that when unbraided flowed round her like a veil, he would have been justified in expecting softness and a love of softness, beauty and a perception of beauty, to be distinctive traits of her mind. Nor would he have been deceived. Her birth, her education, but, above all, the genius with which

she was gifted, combined to inspire a passion for the ethereal, the tender, the imaginative, the heroic,—in one word, the beautiful. It was in her a faculty divine, and yet of daily life;—it touched all things, but, like a sunbeam, touched them with 'a golden finger.' Any thing abstract or scientific was unintelligible and distasteful to her; her knowledge was extensive and various, but, true to the first principle of her nature, it was poetry that she sought in history, scenery, character, and religious belief,—poetry that guided all her studies, governed all her thoughts, coloured all her conversation. Her nature was at once simple and profound; there was no room in her mind for philosophy, or in her heart for ambition,—one was filled by imagination, the other engrossed by tenderness. Her strength and her weakness alike lay in her affections: these would sometimes make her weep at a word,—at others imbue her with courage;—so that she was alternately a 'falcon-hearted dove,' and 'a reed shaken with the wind.' Her voice was a sad, sweet melody,

her spirits reminded me of an old poet's description of the orange-tree, with its

'Golden lamps hid in a night of green,'

or of those Spanish gardens where the pomegranate grows beside the cypress. Her gladness was like a burst of sunlight; and if in her depression she resembled night, it was night wearing her stars. I might describe, and describe for ever, but I should never succeed in portraying Egeria; she was a muse, a grace, a variable child, a dependent woman—the Italy of human beings."

The following letters and notes, addressed at this time to different members of our family circle, will require no further introduction.

"June 18th, 1828.

. . . . "I send you a few lines on a subject, not very *novel* certainly, but yet, I think, like

all others derived from what is beautiful in nature, unexhausted. They have at least the merit of originality, as I wrote them a day or two since, and they have been only seen by a few friends.

. . . . "I enjoyed very much my visit to the pictures this morning: there is, I think, a very deep feeling both of beauty and sorrow in the painting of O'Connor's child. I hope ere long I shall be able to send you the lines in illustration of it; but I really don't know how I shall write under my present restraint: my muse has been a free bird of wood and wild until now, and I do not think this imprisonment to a sofa will at all agree with her: you see I am providing myself with an excuse, in case the lines should prove as dull as bondage may naturally be expected to make them." . . . .

A further and more interesting allusion to the first-mentioned poem, "A Thought of the Rose," will be found in a following letter. It was written in consequence of some one having

made the observation, in Mrs. Hemans' hearing, that nothing new remained to be said of the favourite flower of the poets. But the idea it contains—a yearning hope that all the beautiful things of earth do not vanish to return no more, but that they will be again presented to us in a perfected form, in a happier and unperishing state of existence—was a master-feeling in her mind, and is repeated with increased earnestness in many of her lyrics. Thus in "The song of the rose," she asks,

"Smil'st thou, gorgeous flower?—
O within the spells
Of thy beauty's power
Something dimly dwells
At variance with a world of sorrows and farewells!"

And again in one of her "Scenes and Hymns of Life," the same beautiful fancy is more richly wrought out:

"God hath purified my spirit's eye,
And in the folds of this consummate rose

I read bright prophecies. I see not there,
Dimly and mournfully, the word 'Farewell!'
On the rich petals traced: no, in soft veins
And characters of beauty, I can read
Look up, look heavenward!' . . . .
. . . . Are not these
But germs of things unperishing, that bloom
Beside th'immortal streams? Shall I not find
The lily of the field, the Saviour's flower,
In the serene and never-moaning air,
And the clear starry light of angel eyes,
A thousand fold more glorious?—Richer far
Will not the violet's dusky purple glow,
When it hath ne'er been pressed to broken hearts
A record of lost love!'

"July 5th, 1828.

"My dear Sir,

"I regretted that I was not able to answer your kind letter yesterday evening, having been during the whole day quite *hors de combat*, (a

phrase which I once heard explained by a gentleman, as meaning 'a particular sort of war horse,') by the aid, however, of copious draughts of *sympathy* which were administered to me at proper intervals, I am now much revived, and quite able to enjoy that beautiful work,* with the sight of which you have favoured me. The graceful and spirited designs have so engaged my attention, that I have scarcely yet had time to look at the passages they illustrate, but I think the French appears to be a tiresome sensible sort of a translation, and not to possess any of the delightful absurdities which one generally meets with, whenever Shakspeare and that language come in contact together. Certainly I do not see here any thing to rival that 'Je n'ai pas entendu une souris trotter,' by which one of the Parisian literati so amiably rendered the 'not a mouse stirring' in Hamlet. You are, I

* Retzsch's Outlines to Hamlet.

think, quite right with regard to 'Fair Helen.'* Pray let the title be what you suggest, for it would be by no means desirable to have the memory of Thurtell or Thistlewood recalled by associations with *her*. I am not quite so sure as to the 'Home Sickness,'† the word seems to me so full of tenderness and simplicity. . . . I beg my best thanks to your brother for the very beautiful air he has had the kindness to send me, which I am delighted to possess, only that it makes me long to sing again, and that is a forbidden pleasure. . . . . I was not in the least fatigued the other evening; on the contrary, I am convinced that conversation does me good, and I think all invalids ought to be allowed discretionary power with regard to their amusements. I have been so much pleased

* Her ballad of "Fair Helen of Kirconnel:" to this she had originally given the title of "Fair Helen's last words."

† This was a free translation of the sweet homely German song "*Herz, mein herz*"

with the remaining verses of the sweet '*Heimweh*," that I have translated, though very inadequately (and the *best* translation always reminds me of a dried flower,) two more of them—the fifth and the seventh—which I enclose." . .

Retzsch and Flaxman were Mrs. Hemans' favourites among modern artists. In the Outlines to Hamlet she was particularly struck with that stormy but admirably arranged group of the hero of that tragedy and Laertes struggling over the corpse of Ophelia—with the contrast between the beautiful and unconscious repose of the ill-starred maiden and the passion of the combatants, too fierce to be stayed even by "the holy presence of death".

"I send to you the lines on O'Connor's child, and shall be extremely happy if you think they accord with the spirit of the picture. I should

like them to have a motto from Campbell's poem: will you be kind enough to select one, as I have it not at present within reach. I can hardly tell why, but that painting brings to my mind the wild and sweet song of 'Thekla,' in 'Wallenstein'—'*Das Herz ist gestorben, die welt ist leer*'—I believe it is that the same deep feeling of desolation seems to pervade both. I am so delighted when I meet with any one who knows and loves my favourite '*seelenvollen*'* German, that I could talk of it for ever, I believe. That language, when I first became acquainted with it, opened to me a new world of thought and feeling, and even the music of the '*Eichenland*'†, as Körner calls it, seemed to acquire a deeper tone, when I had gained a familiarity with its noble poetry." . . . .

The letters which follow were written after her return to Wales.

* Full of soul. † Land of Oaks.

"I bore my return home and the subsequent excitement of seeing my family and friends, much better than I could have expected. My greatest sufferings were inflicted by an atrocious old blind fiddler, who, without the least symptom of remorse or compunctious visiting, made victims of the Tyrolese airs, until they seemed to *scream* for mercy under his ruthless touch. Pray tell your brothers I request them both to think of me with compassion. Certainly no human being is fit to be entrusted with despotic power. I consider myself a person of rather a meek and pitiful nature than otherwise, and yet I am not at all sure, that if I had been an absolute queen, I should not have ordered the monster to be thrown overboard 'full fathom five.' I am sure a 'sea change' or any kind of change, would have been most beneficial to his music at least." . .

"I should have written sooner to thank you

for the very sweet music to which you have set my 'Rome, Rome,' but I have again been very unwell, and obliged to resign myself to a state of quiescence, which I would fain hope is at least praiseworthy, as it is certainly anything but agreeable. I am very sorry to hear that you too are so great an invalid; pray take care of yourself, or you will not be able to visit me when I return to Wavertree, and I shall be defrauded of all my promised tunes, and legends, and 'tales of horror.' I hope the ghost stories made your hair stand on end satisfactorily, and that the wind moaned in the true supernatural tone while you were reading, and that the lamp or taper (it ought to have been enshrined in a skull) threw the proper blue flickering light over the page, and gave every mysterious word a more unearthly character. I have been making research for a good Welsh ghost to introduce to your acquaintance, but have not yet met with one whom I consider sufficiently terrific. I suppose you know 'Hibbert's Theory of Appari-

tions;' it is a most provoking book, because the perverse author will *not* leave one in quiet possession of one's faith, and insists upon bringing those hateful engines, commonly called the 'reasoning powers,' into play against all the fabrics of imagination: there are, however, many interesting stories in it, and by judicious management, one may contrive to escape the *moral*. You were right and I was wrong,—a great deal for a lady to admit, is it not?—about the Count Oginski; his song of the Swan, *was* a Polonoise and not a waltz, as I had imagined; and it is indeed most beautiful music with which one could fancy his spirit after death might have haunted her, 'the queenly, but too gentle for a queen.' My sister applauds to the skies your preference of Rossini to all others; for my part, I think that those who have felt and suffered much, will seek for a deeper tone in music than they can find in him;* something more spiritual

* There is a curious passage in Coleridge's "Table

and more profound, such as the soul which breathes through the strains of Mozart and Beethoven; but I speak from feeling alone, and, I doubt not, most unscientifically. I have been very ungrateful in so long neglecting to thank you for the *Ave*, with which we have been very much pleased; I think it is full of expression, and conveys all that I wished and intended the words *should* convey. The coincidence between two or three bars and part of my sister's composition is very striking, but not more so, than one of

Talk," which, as corroborating this judgment, so justly expressed, I cannot but extract. "An ear for music," said he, "is a very different thing from a taste for music. I have no ear whatever; I could not sing an air to save my life; but I have the intensest delight in music, and can detect good from bad. Naldi, a good fellow, remarked to me once at a concert, that I did not seem much interested with a piece of Rossini's which had just been performed. I said it sounded to me like nonsense verses; but I could scarcely contain myself when a thing of Beethoven's followed."

thought, which occurred in a late letter of Captain Sherer to me. He is speaking of roses, and says, 'If a rose were peeping in at the window of the room wherein I was to die, I should no more imagine that I were taking leave of the exotic from Eden *for ever*, than that the spirit within me were about to be annihilated.' Is there not an idea very similar to this in those lines on the Rose which I sent for the 'Wreath?' I look forward with much pleasure, and yet some anxiety, to my return into your neighbourhood. My brother who, I hoped, would have resided with me, has just obtained a military appointment in Ireland, and is, of course, gone thither. I fear I shall feel very lonely and *brotherless*, as I have always been one of a large family circle before. I could laugh—or cry—when I think of the helplessness, natural and acquired, which I have contrived to accumulate." . . . .

"We will conclude a truce respecting Mozart and Rossini, as I see that however long the feud may be carried on, it will leave 'each of the same opinion still.' My sister desires me to tell you, that she entirely coincides with *you* on the subject; (pray admire my candour in transmitting such a message;) she further begs me to ask if you could favour her with a copy of the Preghiera in *Mosè*, with which she is of course acquainted, but is not in possession of the notes. I sincerely hope you are better than when you last wrote to me. My own health is much improved, and I suffer so much more than I had expected from the parting looks of 'the old familiar faces' and scenes around me, that I almost regret my having returned to St. Asaph at all. . . . . I send you a little poem, which I wrote yesterday;* the subject will perhaps interest you." . . . .

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* "The two Voices," published among the Songs of the Affections.

"I was much concerned to receive so indifferent an account of your health in your last note, and sincerely hope I may find you better when I return to Liverpool, which will be about the 25th of the month. I am afraid I shall not do you much good, for I feel as the Welsh country people say in their griefs, '*very heavy*' just now. I had no idea I was growing by so many roots to this place, which—such is mortal inconsistency—I have wished to leave again and again.—I can easily conceive, and more especially at this time, how much you must feel the loss of your sister; in mine, I shall be deprived of the only real companion I have ever had: she is to leave me on Saturday next, and I am haunted by those melancholy words of St. Leon's guest—the unhappy old man with his immortal gifts—'Alone, alone.' But this is rather dismal, and will weary you more than the Mozart controversy, which I really only gave up because I feared I had not science enough to carry me through it with a good grace; this is at least

very candid on my part, as I hope you will allow. Have you composed any more music lately? and have you had any dealings with the supernatural world? I have become acquainted with a very impressive ghost, (though he only said five words,) that of Ficinus, who appeared to his friend Michael Mercato, in consequence of a mutual compact made before death. Tell me if you know him; because if not, I will do myself the pleasure of introducing you." . . . .

". . . . . My whole life has lain within the wild circle of these wild Welsh hills, and I know nobody . . . . . A great many thanks for the German (writing) alphabet, which I shall keep as an enduring record of your kindness and patience; but I look at it with a sort of despair, for certainly such a ferocious-looking crew as these Teutonic letters I never did behold; there is something absolutely *awful* in the necromantic mazes of that indescribable H and V and

W, and I cannot at all feel sure that they do not conceal spells of some sort or other, and that if I were to attempt tracing them I should not find myself all of a sudden surrounded by evil spirits, like poor Benvenuto Cellini, in the Coliseum. I begin to think that the mastery over them, must quite be above the genius of woman. *I* shall *attempt* it, I dare say, but I fear some signal punishment will follow my presumption."

"Rhyllon, Sept. 18, 1828.

"I had an interesting visit a few days since from the poet Montgomery, not the new aspirant to that name, but the 'real Peter Bell.' He is very pleasing in manner and countenance, notwithstanding a mass of troubled, streaming, *meteoric-looking* hair, that seemed as if it had just been contending with the blasts of Snowdon, from which he had just returned, full of animation and enthusiasm. He complained much in the course of conversation, and I

heartily joined with him, of the fancy which wise people have in the present times, *for setting one right;* cheating one, that is, out of all the pretty old legends and stories, in the place of which they want to establish dull facts. We mutually grumbled about Fair Rosamond, Queen Eleanor and the poisoned wound, Richard the Third and his hump-back; but agreed most resolutely that nothing *should* ever induce us to give up William Tell . . ."

It was about this time that "The Farewell to Wales" was written.

"I bless thee for all the true bosoms that beat
Where'er a low hamlet smiles up to thy skies,
For thy cottage-hearths, burning the strangers to greet,
For the soul that shines forth from thy children's kind eyes." . . .

Mrs. Hemans always spoke of this "land of her childhood, her home, and her dead," with interest and affection. When she sailed from

its shore, she covered her face in her cloak, desiring her boys to tell her when the hills were out of sight, that she might then look up. She would often, too, refer to the pain she had suffered,—in addition to the sorrow of parting from her kindred and friends, for the first time since her birth, to make actual acquaintance with the daily cares of life — upon taking leave of the simple and homely peasantry of the neighbourhood, by whom she was beloved with that old-fashioned heartiness which yet lingers in some of the nooks and remote places of England. Many of them rushed forward to touch the posts of the gate through which the poetess had passed; and when, three years afterwards, she paid a visit to St. Asaph, came and wept over her, and entreated her to return and make her home among them again.

CHAPTER V.

Wavertree—Mrs. Hemans' indisposition to general society—Her house—Visitors and Albums—Extracts from familiar correspondence—"Ballads of the Cid"—"Memoirs of Prince Eugene"—Letter to Miss Mitford on the success of "Rienzi"—Letter to Mrs. Howitt.

It was in the autumn of the year 1828, that Mrs. Hemans finally established herself at Wavertree. She had chosen this pleasant village as a residence, under the idea, that its vicinity to Liverpool must ensure her the advantages of good education for her sons, and cultivated society for herself. But the event proved she was mistaken: Liverpool was then singularly defici-

ent in good schools, and its society (as must necessarily be the case in a town so entirely commercial) too exclusively under the dominion of an aristocracy of wealth, too much broken up by small distinctions of sect and party, to offer her much that suited her peculiar tastes. While she recognised truth in sober earnest with steadiness and warmth, she was too apt to laugh away argument with that wit,—which as has been happily said, was "poetical wit, dealing chiefly in fanciful allusion and brilliant remark,"—to be thoroughly understood, or valued by the circles to which Roscoe and Currie had formerly belonged. The less intelligent, who discovered that she did not enjoy the formalities of society, great balls, great dinners, dull public amusements, after their fashion—and there is no code so arbitrary as the statute of manners in a provincial town—who remarked a singularity or two in her dress, and were kept at a distance by allusions to motives, and feelings, and pursuits of which they knew nothing,

stood aloof from her with suspicion and uneasiness.

These circumstances are not mentioned either in a spirit of reproach or of derision; they are simply brought forward to account for the retirement in which Mrs. Hemans held herself. She had never learned the feignings and *prettinesses* of the world's manner; nor, on the other hand, did she find it agreeable always to sit upon her throne, as it were, with her book of magic upon her knee, and her wand in her outstretched arm. Her humour was sprightly and searching, as well as original: she could talk delicious nonsense, as well as inspired sense, and the utilitarian and the serious, who would fain have had a moral placarded and paraded upon every chance phrase of conversation, "wondered and went their way." At this time she was sought out in her retreat by every species of literary homage, from every corner of England and America, offers of service, letters of introduction, crowded upon her; literary engagements

were pressed upon her from the divinity treatise to the fairy tale; and yet she was never so delightful, never so happy as when she could come in like an inmate to the fire-sides of the few who understood her, at times, making most pleasant merriment of the *notorieties* of her lot; at times, when loftier subjects were touched upon, rising to a lofty and glowing eloquence, which I have seldom heard reached, certainly never surpassed. "Were I called upon," says a correspondent who knew her well, "to mention what I think most individual about Mrs. Hemans, I should particularize the singular union of sweetness and impatience in her temper. She could hardly be induced to join any society not congenial to herself; and it is much, and yet no more than the truth, to say, that her good-humour was unbroken, and that no sharp or scornful speech is on record against her." But her own feelings with respect to society will be better gathered from one of her notes than from any further description.

* "My dear ———,

"I should have acknowledged your very kind letter from Edinburgh; but that it gave me the hope of finding you at home, on my return from Wavertree, and I was then within a few days of leaving Wales. As I am, however, disappointed in this expectation, I will no longer delay telling you with what real pleasure I look for the companionship you so kindly offer me, and how truly I join in the wishes of your family for your return. You will, I trust, come to me often, very often. I have no taste, no health for the enjoyment of extensive society. I have been all my life a creature of hearth and home, and now that the 'mother that looked on my childhood' is gone, and that my brothers and sisters are scattered far and wide, I have no wish, but to gather around the few *friends* who will love me and enter into my pursuits. I wish I could give you the least idea of what *kindness* is to me—

how much more, how far dearer than *fame.** I trust that you and I and ——— may pass many pleasant evenings together this winter at my little dwelling, which I hope to see often cheered and lit up by happy and 'familiar faces.' The limits of my frank will not allow me to write more; only I *must* offer my kind regards

* "Thou shalt have Fame! O mockery! give the reed
From storms a shelter—give the drooping vine
Something round which its tendrils may entwine,
Give the parched flower a rain-drop—and the meed
Of Love's kind words to woman."

Properzia Rossi. Records of Woman.

"They crown me with a glistering crown
Borne from a deathless tree;
I hear the pealing music of renown—
O Love! forsake me not!
Mine were a lone, dark lot,
Bereft of thee!"

Genius singing to Love. National Lyrics.

to the friend you mention as taking so much pleasure in my poetry." . . .

The house which Mrs. Hemans occupied was too small to deserve the name—the third of a cluster or row close to a dusty road,—and yet too townish in its appearance and situation to be called a cottage. It was set in a small court, and within doors was gloomy and comfortless, for its two parlours, (one with a tiny book-room opening from it,) were hardly larger than closets; but, with her harp, and her books,* and

* "Come let me make a sunny realm around thee
Of thought and beauty. Here are books and flowers,
With spells to loose the fetter which hath bound thee,
The ravelled coil of this world's feverish hours."
Books and Flowers. National Lyrics.

The whole of this piece is exquisitely happy in its expression, and, a rare thing in one of Mrs. Hemans'

the flowers with which she loved to fill her little rooms, they presently assumed a habitable, almost an elegant appearance. Could they now talk of all that they had seen and heard, what delightful records might they give of the evenings when she gathered round her hearth those passing literary friends in whose society she found such genuine enjoyment! Among these I must mention Miss Jewsbury, Mary Howitt, Dr. Bowring, and I cannot but regret, that I have no specific memorials of the conversation so varied, so sparkling, so suggestive, which was struck out in this encounter of minds of no common order.

These, however, were holiday treats: her daily fare was less palatable and welcome. The ex-

poems, written at this particular time, cheerful in its close—

"— Too richly dowered, O friend! are we for sadness—
Look on an empire—mind and nature—ours!"

cellent inhabitants of the village in which she had taken up her residence,—staunch votaries of tea, and cards, and "sociable visiting,"—had never before numbered among their neighbours, one so distinguished and gifted as she was. Scarcely had she settled herself at Wavertree, than she was besieged by visitors to a number positively bewildering. A more heterogeneous company cannot be possibly imagined. Some came merely to stare at the strange poetess; others to pay proper neighbourly morning calls, and discuss household matters. Great was their surprise at finding that she was not ready with an answer on these important topics. Others, far the most unwelcome because the most artificial, came, bearing small cut-and-dried offerings of compliment, with such literary small-talk in their mouths as might have befitted the answers to correspondents of the Lady's Magazine, some sixty years since. All these must have had scanty satisfaction in their visits. They could only report that they had found a lady neither

short nor tall, no longer youthful or beautiful in appearance. whose manners were quiet and refined, and who, strange to tell, had nothing to say of theatres, concerts, &c., &c.—nothing to quote of "the sweet new poem"—no sympathy with the card-table, and the "comfortable early party." The ladies, however, could remark, "that her room was sadly littered with books and papers, that the strings of her harp were half of them broken, and that she wore a veil upon her head like no one else." Nor did the gentlemen make much way by their Della Cruscan admiration; when the stock of compliment was once exhausted and acknowledged, there remained nothing new to be said on either side, though there were none more frankly delighted, and few more sensible of the *genuine* pleasure she gave by her writings than Mrs. Hemans. Her works were a part of herself, herself of them; and those who enjoyed and understood the one, enjoyed and understood the other, and made their way at once to her heart.

I must not forget to allude to what Charles Lamb calls the "Albumean persecution," which she was here called upon to endure. One gentleman, a total stranger to her, beset her, ere she had been three weeks a householder, with a huge virgin folio splendidly bound, which he had bought "on purpose that she might open it with one of her exquisite poems." People not only brought their own books, but likewise those of "my sister and my sister's child," all anxious to have something written on purpose for themselves. On the whole, she bore these honours meekly, and for awhile, in the natural kindliness of her heart, gave way to the current. Sometimes, however, her sense of the whimsical would break out; sometimes it was provoked by the thorough-going and coarse perseverance of the intrusions against which it was difficult to guard. What could be done with persons, who would call, and call again, and yet a third time in the course of one morning, and refuse to take their final departure till they were told "when Mrs. Hemans

would be at home?" It was on one of these occasions that she commissioned a friend of hers, in a lively note, "to procure her a dragon to be kept in her court-yard." At another time, (and that I well remember was a most flagrant case) her vexation found vent in no less cheerful a manner:—

"They had an Album with them,. . . absolutely an Album! You had scarcely left me to my fate —O how you laughed the moment you were set free!—when the little woman with the inquisitorial eyes informed me, that the tall woman with the superior understanding—Heaven save the mark!—was *ambitious* of possessing my autograph, and out leaped in lightning forth 'the Album.' A most evangelical and edifying book it is truly; so I, out of pure spleen, mean to insert in it something as strongly savouring of the Pagan miscellany as I *dare*. O the 'pleasures

of Fame!' O that I were but the little girl in the top of the elm tree again!

"Your much enduring,

"F. H."

It was as much the antipathy to this commonplace and intrusive curiosity, (how different from the modest and appreciating respect with which genius should be approached!) as the sympathy with pursuits, tastes, and fancies, in some measure possessed in common by both parties, that made her take refuge and find pleasure by our fireside. She had not long taken her place there, before, with a quickness and kindliness which it is impossible to remember without affectionate regret, she adapted herself, like a sister, to all the peculiar and widely differing pursuits and dispositions of the separate members of our circle. There is hardly a poem or a lyric in the two volumes which contain the fruits of this period of almost daily intercourse, whose origin I can-

not trace to some conversation, to some momentary fancy, or image, which sprung up in the midst of those sparkling, sprightly evenings. In the letters which follow will be found constant allusions to the mirth of the moment which gave so happy and unexpected a relief to her more melancholy hours. Most true to her own nature, as well as beautiful in itself, is the final verse of one of her charming songs.

" There's many a heart, wild singer !
Like thy forsakén tower,
Where joy no more may linger,
Where love hath left his bower;
And there's many a spirit ev'n like thee,
To mirth as lightly stirred,
Tho' it soar from ruins in its glee,
O ! lonely ! lonely bird !"

One night she would playfully give vent to the thousand conceits, and exuberances, and imagined despotism in which, were she a queen,

she would indulge herself; filling up the offices of her court, and household, in the old euphuistic style: at another time she would come to us full of some legend or historical situation, which she had discovered in the course of her day's reading, and which she would recount and describe with a faith and earnestness peculiar to the poetical. Or she would bring the last lyric she had written, or the last strange letter she had received,—and some were "passing strange." It was necessary for her happiness, in fact, to find those to whom she could constantly open "all that was in her heart." Of the fragments of letters which follow, all those marked with an asterisk are addressed to a correspondent of her own sex. They are given without strict regard to chronological order, to observe which, indeed, was impossible.

"My dear Sir,

"I am sure you will have pleasure in hearing that I did not suffer at all, '*mais tout au contraire*,

Sire,' for my *escapade* last night. All the way home I was meditating most sagely upon the strange inconsistencies of human nature, and of *my own* nature more especially, that with so much of

'— the perilous stuff
Which weighs upon the heart;'

pressing heavily upon mine, and with uncertainty and doubts respecting my future path, enough to perplex the head of *Earl Greatheart* himself, I *could* so utterly forget this, and be for a few hours a very child again; yes, indeed, and a very foolish child. I moralized 'the matter into a thousand similies;' but, for this time I will spare you. . . M. ——— ——— has sent me to read the Baron de Staël's letters on England: they set to treat of just the sort of matters which, in my . . ' lave, I mean to leave with such entire confidence to my prime ministers. Perhaps, therefore, he would like to look at them by way of preparation."

*" No indeed, my dear—there is *no* enjoyment to compare with the happiness of gladdening hearth and home for others—it is woman's own true sphere; . . . I cannot therefore regret your usefulness, though I should rejoice if it allowed you to pay me more frequent visits . . . . I am not at all well just now; I believe it is owing to the great fatigue I have had of late with my boys; and this time of the year makes one so long for the far away—do not you think so? If my sister were near me now, I should lay my head down upon her shoulder and cry 'like a tired child.' How very foolish —— would think me! and rightly too! so do not betray my weakness! . . ."

" I really am rather ashamed of you, and of myself too. How any one *can* laugh at a piece of such ineffable absurdity; and yet I *did* laugh all the while most heartily, quarrelling with you, myself and still more the odious writer of L. E.

G., as the creature calls it. All three, I think, deserve to be set down for a whole evening to play with an ivory alphabet: the Chinese puzzles would be too highly intellectual for them. . . I expect to be established in my new abode on Monday or Tuesday next; if you will then be kind enough to come and see me, and help me to arrange about my piano, I shall be particularly obliged, as I do not think I can bear the burden of my life without music, for more than two or three days. . . ."

". . . . I send Herder's beautiful ballads of the 'Cid,' and I wish you may take as much pleasure as I have always done in their proud *clarion music*. I often think, what a dull, faded thing life,—such life as *we* lead in this later age,—would appear to one of those fiery knights of old. Only imagine 'my Cid,' spurring the good steed Bavieca through the streets of Liverpool! or coming to pass an evening with me at

Wavertree! which, notwithstanding, I hope you and your brothers and sisters will be kind enough to do very soon. . . ."

"I have been much amused with the 'Memoirs of Prince Eugene,' which you were so kind as to lend me. Sometimes I am quite angry with him for being so happy without any domestic ties; and then again, I think that those who go through life with the fewest affections, thus exposing the fewest vulnerable points to sorrow, ought to be, and may well be, the happiest."

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* "My dear ———,

"Pray do not be alarmed at this avalanche of books. I have just received some copies of the 'Records' from my publisher, and I hope you will favour me by accepting the one I now send, as a slight token that I wish for a place among your

'forty friends, or forty thieves,' as I used to call Miss Jewsbury's host of allies. There is, I think, only one additional piece in the volume, 'the Death-day of Körner.' The American poems which I promised to lend Mr. ——— (what *would* a Spaniard think of that name?) perhaps you will be kind enough to send him, as I do not know his address. I am sure you will be glad to hear that I have not in the least suffered for my very pleasant evening at your house. I do not know when I have felt so much at home. But I saw very little of *you*, and this I the more regret, as, from the highly moral tone you assumed towards the close of the evening, I am sure I must have lost a great number of improving aphorisms. As for me, I really am 'a creature not too bright or good' by any means, but a mere mortal woman, and I wish to gain wisdom much, and I want you to come and pass a day with me for this purpose. . . . That 'Muse Céleste' of Lucien's is waiting with heavenly patience for ——— to assist me in paying my further devo-

tions to her. We have been talking much of French poetry lately: does he know, or do you, the 'dernier chant de Corinne?' I sent it marked in the third volume of the book, and you shall have the others if you wish. If the soul without the form be enough to constitute poetry, then it surely *is* poetry, of the very highest order. The Swiss airs are for ——— to look over. I wish he would arrange any one of them that he thinks prettiest, and then I will write words for it; but alas! 'where's the voice to breathe them?' Only imagine a lady with whom I am going to pass an evening having sent to a friend of mine to borrow my poems previously, '*pour se munir*' I suppose, for the occasion. Mistaken woman. I shall talk to her about the last Parisian hat, and lama trimmings, and nothing else, I am resolved! I hope I shall see you here *before* the day when you are to come and 'talk of virtue,' and should be glad if ———, when he has nothing better to do, would look over the '*Gloria in excelsis*,' which has been lent to me, because I fear it is not quite correct. . . .

"After you have taught me how to make a virtuous queen, I wish you would instruct me how to keep plants alive. I am killing an unhappy myrtle and rose, out of pure ignorance."

"I return you the Gem, my dear—with many thanks. I have been rather disappointed in its perusal, and think some of the pieces quite intolerable—only to be paralleled by the L. E. G.'s. in the New Monthly. When next you come to see me, expect to find me incrusted all over with stupidity. . . I must certainly turn bird of passage again, (provided sufficient life be left in me,) if the 'work-day-world' people here do not let me alone; 'I shall order my wings and be off to the west,' for there is positively no enduring it. I have been kept alive in the intervals of conjugating the verb, '*s'ennuyer*' with these 'human mortals,' by a few pleasant letters. I have heard from Cyril Thornton, as I cannot help calling him, and Miss Mitford. The latter

writes so unaffectedly about the success of her 'Rienzi,' and the delight it has given her father that you will be quite pleased, and almost feel as if you knew her when you read her letter. . . ."

A fuller and more direct reference to this subject will be found in the following letter:*—the genuine, womanly sympathy, uttered in every line of it, will, I am sure, be felt as it deserves.

* I cannot but here acknowledge the more than kindness with which the letter in question, and the former ones addressed to Miss Mitford, have been placed at my disposal. Nor can I resist proving, from a passage in a delightful letter which accompanied the favour, in which the success of Rienzi is also referred to,—how just an appreciation Mrs. Hemans possessed of her friend, not merely as an authoress but likewise as a correspondent.

" November 10, 1828.

" My dear Miss Mitford,

" Accept my late, though sincere and cordial congratulations on the brilliant success of 'Rienzi,' of which I have read with unfeigned gratification.* I thought of your father and mother, and could not help imagining, that your feelings must be like those of the Greek general,

" There is a fascination in the acted drama, which none but a successful author can tell; and yet it is rather the doubtful intoxication of high excitement, than a real and satisfactory pleasure. The second night of 'Rienzi' I went to see it,—not the first; and I was so entirely bewildered, dizzied by the applause, and the far more flattering stopping of the audience at passages which the pit wanted to hear, that I myself, who am not at all deaf in general, lost entirely the sense of hearing. I saw the people upon the stage, but they might have been acting Mirandola, or Romeo and Juliet, or any other Italian story of the middle ages for aught that I heard of the words. Coming home, I never closed my eyes, and next day I was as one rising from a long fever,—weary, exhausted, sad—feeling a void, a vacuum: the hope was gone, and the

who declared that his greatest delight in victory arose from the thought of his parents. I have no doubt that your enjoyment of your triumph has been of a similar nature. I ought to have acknowledged long, long since, your kind present of the little volume of plays valued both for your sake and *their's*, for they are indeed full of beauty; but I have been a drooping creature for

triumph did not fill its place. On the contrary, I had a sense of not deserving my success, and never in my life was so thoroughly humble, as in that day of imputed extasy. This does not sound very tempting to a dramatic author; and yet there is an unspeakable fascination in it, too. I met Mr. Hope about that time, and happening to sit next him at dinner, he began questioning me as to the feeling. 'Aye' said the author of Anastasius—'it is Fame coming close to you—close enough to be clutched. I know nothing like it except the success of a great speech in Parliament, and that hardly is complete. You only sway the minds of one half your auditors, and have, besides, too much to think of as your speech goes on, to abandon yourself entirely to feeling.'"

months,—ill, and suffering much from the dispersion of a little band of brothers and sisters, among whom I had lived, and who are now all scattered: and, strange as it may seem to say, I am now for the first time in my life holding the *reins of government*, independent, managing a household myself; and I never liked any thing less than '*ce triste empire de soi-même.*' It really suits me as ill as the *southron* climate did your wild Orkney school-girls, whom perhaps you, the creator of so many fair forms and images, may have forgotten, but I have not. I have changed my residence since I last wrote to you, and my address is now at Wavertree, near Liverpool, where I shall, as the Welsh country-people say, 'take it very kind' if you write to me; and I really cannot help venturing to hope that you *will*. I have yet only read of Rienzi, a few noble passages given by the newspapers and magazines, but in a few days I hope to be acquainted with the whole. Every woman ought to be proud of your triumph—in this age, too, when dramatic

triumph seems of all others the most difficult. How are May, and Mossy, and Lucy and Jack Hatch?—no, Jack Hatch actually *died*, to the astonishment of myself and my boys, who thought, I believe, he had been 'painted for eternity,'—and Mrs. Allen, and the rest of the dear villagers? And your parents? I trust they are well. Your mother, I believe, is always an invalid, but I hope she is able fully to enjoy the success of her daughter, as only a mother *can* enjoy it. How hollow sounds the voice of fame to an orphan!* Farewell, my

* The same idea is simply and beautifully introduced by Mrs. Hemans, in "The Charmed Picture"—an address to the miniature of her mother.

"Look on me *thus*, when hollow praise
Hath made the weary pine
For one true tone of other days,
One glance of love like thine!

"Look on me *thus*, when sudden glee
Bears my quick heart along,

dear Miss Mitford—long may you have the delight of gladdening a father and mother !

" Believe me, ever faithfully yours,

" FELICIA HEMANS."

There was no more beautiful trait in Mrs. Hemans' character than the total absence of any thing like rivalry—of the smallest shadow of a wish to depreciate or discourage the efforts of her contemporaries. Her judgment, indeed, was as fastidious as it was independent: she did not estimate the writings or the endowments of others according to the fashion of the day, but by the standard of her own wholly poetical feelings: and thus she might be sometimes too exclusive, but never voluntarily unfair, or warped

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On wing that struggles to be free,
As bursts of skylark song.

" In vain ! in vain !" . . . . .

by the smallnesses which creep into minds less earnest. Though so naturally rich, even to luxury, in her own imagery and forms of expression, she was wholly intolerant of all counterfeit sentiment and pretty phraseology: these she would call "*property* writing," "painted language." She was too entirely and earnestly devoted to her art ever to bear a part in the antiphony of hollow compliment. One of her favourite quotations was the satire on the Lichfield coterie, which she would repeat with exquisite humour:

> "Tuneful poet! England's glory,
> Mr. Hayley—that is you."
> "Ma'am, *you* carry all before you,
> Trust me, Lichfield swan, you do!"

But, in proportion as her taste was fastidious and peculiar, so were her preferences strong and lasting. "If she could see no fault in her friends," she would playfully and ingeniously argue, "they were very few in number; and she was sure

that she could not have adopted them so entirely as a part of herself without good and convincing cause." The pleasure she took in the writings of many of her own sex—among whom I may mention Miss Baillie, Miss Bowles, Mrs. Shelley—was thorough-going and sincere: and this chapter cannot be better closed than by a letter addressed to another of her contemporaries,—though widely differing from herself in the character and sources of her inspiration—no less nobly and sincerely a poetess.

"Wavertree, Dec. 11th, 1828.

"My dear Mrs. Howitt,

"You will not, I trust, have thought me very ungrateful for your delightful letter, though it has been left so long unanswered. I am sure I shall give your heart greater pleasure by writing *now*, than I could have done by an immediate reply; for I had suffered so deeply, so much more than I had imagined possible, from leaving Wales,—and many kind and 'old familiar faces there,'—as

well as from the breaking up of my family on the occasion of my sister's marriage, that my spirits were, long after my arrival here, overshadowed by constant depression. My health also had been much affected by mental struggles, and I thought within myself, 'I will not write what I know would only sadden so kind a heart; I will wait till the sunshine breaks in.' And now, I *can* tell you that it begins to dawn, for my health and spirits are decidedly improving, and I am reconciling myself to many things in my changed situation, which at first pressed upon my heart with all the weight of a Switzer's home-sickness. Among these is *the want of hills.* O this waveless horizon!—how it wearies the eye accustomed to the sweeping outline of mountain scenery! I would wish that there were at least woodlands like those so delightfully pictured in your husband's 'Chapter on Woods,' to supply their place; but it is a dull, *uninventive* nature all around here, though *there* must be somewhere little fairy nooks, which I hope

by degrees to discover. I must recur to the before-mentioned 'chapter,' it delighted me so particularly by the freshness of its spirit, deep feeling, and minute observation of nature; 'the fading of the leaf, which ought rather to be called the *kindling* of the leaf,'—how truly and how poetically was that said! That I might become better acquainted with his writings, I have lately borrowed some volumes of 'Time's Telescope,' in which I believed I could not fail to discover the same characteristics; and I anticipate much enjoyment from the 'Book of the Seasons,' which, I am sure, will be a rich treasury of natural imagery and pure feeling. I hear with great pleasure, my dear friend, that the place of your lost one is to be supplied, 'the hollow of his absence' filled up. All the kindly wishes of a woman's and a mother's heart attend you on the occasion! I shall wish much to hear of your safety and well-doing: perhaps Mr. Howitt will send a line under cover to the Bishop of St. Asaph, (who is now from home on

different visits, or I should have procured a frank for this,) to inform me of yourself and your babe. I trust your dear little girl is well: has she quite forgotten 'Felicia Hemans?' I should like very much to send you the new edition of the 'Forest Sanctuary;' how can my bookseller have it conveyed best? I cannot tell you with how much pleasure I read your praises in the *Noctes Ambrosianæ:* they were bestowed, too, in language so delicate and appropriate, that I think you must have felt gratified, especially as you have *one to gratify* by your success. The pleasure of fame to woman must ever be reflected, such at least is my feeling of it. I faithfully transmitted your message to Miss Jewsbury, and can assure you that the cordial esteem with which she speaks and thinks of you, is fully adequate to the feelings you entertain for *her*. I have written a good deal since I established myself here, and I do not think you will yet perceive any change in the character of my poetry. Miss —— desires her kindest love to you, and

bids me say she was utterly *shocked* by my delinquency when she found I had never written to thank you, in her name as well as my own, for the two beautiful little poems you left as autographs. Now God bless you, and believe me to be

"Ever affectionately yours,

"FELICIA HEMANS."

CHAPTER VI.

Familiar correspondence continued—Prince de Lardaria—"Heaven and Earth"—Mrs. Hemans' personal carelessness—Ode to Music—Circus— Household cares—The word "Barb"—Imitations of our English classics—Irish music—Hottentot poetry.

THE present chapter, and part of the following one, will be devoted to such fragments of notes and letters as illustrate that buoyancy of temperament and quaintness of expression which have been already described as so decidedly characteristic of Mrs. Hemans. I should be unfaithful to the truth, were I, in attempting a picture of her mind, wholly to withhold all memorials of its gayer moods. It is needless to

say that she *could* write nothing unkind or sarcastic; and that all her pleasantries, whether published or withheld, are but evidences of the same disposition as made her relish, without reserve, a parody upon one of her own poems. There was something of the Beatrice about her to the last; she loved the fence of words; she was keenly alive to humour when untinged by coarseness, which she repelled with as natural an antipathy, as Lord Herbert of Cherbury's to the dust or soil which less finely-moulded mortals contract. Few could have surpassed her in the employment of subtle and varied *badinage*, had she chosen to commit to paper the conceits and fantasies which gave such a charm to her conversation. These (to follow a metaphor of Beranger's, who, in describing the extravagances of some young French writer, happily calls them "the scoriæ, indicating the vein of precious metal beneath") were the bubbles sparkling in the sunshine of a fountain, whose waters were as deep as they were transparent;—to conceive the true

grotesque, indeed, without trenching upon the farcical, the mind must have a power over the springs of tears as well as of laughter. But the world in its short-sightedness too often refuses to acknowledge the existence of this twofold possession, particularly in a woman; and Mrs. Hemans was wisely unwilling to risk the chance of being confounded with the heartless and satirical, whose laughter comes of disappointment and bitterness, not elasticity of temper: for a similar cause, she rarely gave her spirits way in general society. And yet few who have possessed such power to laugh, have ever received greater provocation "to make laugh." The frequent and unwelcome invasions of her privacy, to which allusion has been made, were often as comical as they were annoying. The hyperbolical compliments which were paid to her must have raised a smile on a Fakir's face. I have heard her requested to read aloud, that the visitor "might carry away an impression of the sweetness of her tones." I have been

present when another eccentric guest, upon her characterising some favourite poem as happily as was her wont, clapped her hands as at a theatre, and exclaimed, "O Mrs. Hemans! *do* say that again, that I may put it down and remember it!" The subjects suggested to her as themes for her poems were motley enough to help out the contriver of a pantomime. What wonder, then, that when she could no longer keep aloof from those who could not understand her, she would vent her weariness in some whimsical complaint, or epithet, or *soubriquet?* It must be recorded, however, and insisted upon, that in no case whatsoever did she ever wield the bright and searching weapon she possessed against those who had injured or neglected her.

*. . . . "Do you not think that the name on this card, my dear ——, will be a delightful title to introduce into our court?—Prince de Lardaria? I think I shall bestow it on my *chef de cuisine.* I have been in the most *mobile* of hu-

mours the whole of this day, half laughing, half crying, over volumes of old letters which I found it necessary to destroy: you would have said there *was* an anticipation of royalty in the sovereign indifference with which the communications of various 'persons of distinction' were tossed about—but, alas! deeper feelings than these will arise as the 'dim procession' of

The cold, the faithless, and the dead,

seems to pass before me, called up by the sight of their once dear names and hands.

"The enclosed, however, which, for its delightful absurdities, was rescued from the pyre, I think will excite only mirthful sensations: pray read it! I should be loth to admit any thing contrary to the *esprit de corps* which animates our whole sex; but one *must* confess that 'sweet Mrs. ——' *could*, *would*, or *should* have been so described only by a lady. . . . . I wish you would read it to Mr. ——, and say that I think of going to the Fancy Ball in that dress, and I

wish he would attend me in a costume suitable to the dignity of the Earl Greatheart.

"Ever your affectionate

"F. H."

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*. . . . "I must tell you of a most delightful dilemma into which an unhappy gentleman fell, who handed Miss —— and myself into our carriage at night, and meant to bestow some *fleurette* of gallantry upon *one* of the two, it would be highly unbecoming to decide *which*. After seeing us safely deposited, 'Well,' said the cavalier, 'there you are, *Heaven and Earth side by side!*' 'Truly,' replied she, in rather a piqued tone, '*I*, at least, ought to be much flattered.' 'Hush! let him be tormented a little,' I whispered to her,—then turning to the disconcerted beau,—'Really, Mr. ——, I can have no sort of objection to your complimenting Miss ——, but I do not exactly see why it should be done at MY expense.' So away, we

drove, before another word could be said, and I only hope he will consider himself as having *two* apologies to make, and so get 'deeper and deeper still' into the mire. I trust I shall be able to come to you on Wednesday evening, but really *le monde* is beginning to be excessively troublesome. . . . . .

"Ever your affectionate

"F. H."

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* "My dear ——,

"I shall retire to rest this night with more ineffable satisfaction than ever the most virtuous of queens did, from the consciousness of having fulfilled all my duties—that means, paid all my visits. 'Virtue is its own reward,' is it not? All the copy-books say so, and they must be right. Indeed the event has proved it, for, besides doing my duty, I escaped nine morning visitors, who invaded my territories during my absence, and were much more, I have no doubt,

like the 'nine Miss Symmons'—(are you acquainted with those ladies?)—than the nine Muses. . . . . ,

"I return Miss Mitford. Your brother —— was so kind as to say he could lend me the second volume of the 'Fairy Legends,' for which I have a most child-like taste, particularly on winter evenings. . . . . Now, good night! If I do not sleep well after all my efforts of virtue today, I shall say that the world has had a great deal of *cant* poured out upon it these six thousand years, respecting the benefits of an approving conscience.

"Believe me, affectionately yours,

"F. H."

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* "I send you the sketch of St. Asaph, my dear ——, which, such as it is, I hope will arrive uninjured. I quarrelled with it so violently when I attempted to finish it, that if it had not been *promised*, I should certainly have

thrown it into the fire. From want of practice, or weakness of the hand, I found myself quite unable to make my trees to '*behave distinctly*,' as Dandie Dinmont says, and I have contrived to give my cathedral a paralytic stroke, which has made one side shrink in wofully. Here it is, however, with all its imperfections on its head. I am sure you will be glad to hear that, although still very languid, I have not had any relapse, in spite of my incorrigible perverseness with regard to sage advice. I shall just give you a sketch of the attacks and defence, after which I dare say you will give me up for lost. One advises: 'My *dear* Mrs. Hemans, you *really* go out much too lightly clad; indeed you *ought* to have a cloak lined with fur.' 'So I had once,' answer I, 'and a goodly thing it was, and a very great accession of dignity it brought me; only, unfortunately, I never could breathe in it, so I dismantled all the fur.' Another friend—'I *do* hope you wear a flannel wrapping-gown, when you dress in the morning, this very

cold weather.' 'No, indeed; if I did I never should get dressed at all; it would tire me so much that I should never reach the last of the curls, and must receive my friends *en papillottes.*' Another—'*Indeed*, you should use comforters, it really is quite wrong in you (these last words in italics) to go out without them.' 'Comforters?—truly I need them sometimes: pray in what shape and hue are they to appear?' 'Oh! they are woollen envelopes for the wrists and throat, and the very best things———' 'Odious! in woollen! 'twould a saint provoke,' exclaim I; 'tell me no more of comforters!' But then comes the greatest barbarism of all:—'If I *could* but persuade you to wear, what I know many ladies do,' (now, my dear, can you believe such a libel?) 'a delicate piece of hareskin next your chest.' 'And why not 'hang a calf-skin on my recreant limbs' at once?' I reply:—'A hareskin to be treasured in one's bosom!—a hareskin amulet!—what *will* the march of intellect come to next?' Pray do not consider any of

these observations as at all personal; *you* really make your advances in so winning and insinuating a manner, that it is quite a pleasure to have a fencing-match with you; but, in general, when ladies make their appearance in my room, I 'screw my courage to the sticking-place,' and prepare for an 'affair *à l'outrance.* Whenever my death, from neglect of fur cloaks and flannel wrapping-gowns, comforters and hare-skins, does really take place, as the fulfilment of a thousand and one prophecies, I have the pleasure of thinking that it must be a matter of general satisfaction. All the comments on the occasion will, I have no doubt, close the like celebrated story of Tommy and Harry, (which I earnestly hope you remember,) in the spelling-book of old, 'Don't *care* always comes to an evil end.' What a quantity of nonsense I have bestowed upon you! I can only hope it may do you good properly 'exhibited,' as the doctors say, it is something serviceable; for my own part, very often if I laugh it is that I may not weep.

However, notwithstanding my April moods, believe me,

"Ever very affectionately yours,

"F. H."

"TO MR. L. ——,*

"My dear Sir,

"I fear I shall not have any evening, that I can quite call my own, until Friday or Saturday of next week, on either of which it will give me great pleasure to receive you. . . I think I shall not ask any 'human mortals,' as Titania calls them, to meet you, unless you *particularly* wish for the society of ——— who so

* The above letter was addressed to a gentleman whose powers of amateurship were never more happily displayed than in the spirited and pathetic music to which he has united many of Mrs. Hemans' songs, some written purposely for him. It will be seen in further portions of these memorials how largely I am indebted to his kind assistance.

edified us in the concert-room. Pray do not betray me, but I really have been haunted ever since that awful hour, by a portentous vision of two grey eyes, transfixing my very soul, with a fiery glance that looks as if it said, 'Write an ode to music: you *must* write an Ode to Music!' No wonder that such a bold and original suggestion should take a strong hold of the imagination. I am under a humiliating impression of having actually composed in my sleep, during the influence of this deadly spell, four lines, beginning 'Enchanting nymph,' but of the remainder, *non mi ricordo.* Can you recollect how Benvenuto Cellini freed himself from the evil spirits that beset him in the Coliseum? I think it was by some kind of fumigation; fain would I discover some magic herb to lay the apparition of ——————. I have an ominous feeling, too, that we are destined to meet again, and that 'the words of fear' will again be solemnly uttered—if so, I am sure they will drive me to some deed worthy of the Tragic Muse herself.

My boys will leave Madame Albrizzi's works for you. I think they will interest you, though *La Signora Madre* is occasionally rather too declamatory. I hope you will be good enough to inquire about Ducrow and his Venetian performances; and to remember the music of Haydn, with which you kindly promised to make me acquainted. But, above all, *do* arrange in your own mind *the* Ode to Music. I am sure you will have an especial inspiration for the purpose, and in the hope of something, which will most happily blend the *affetuoso* with the *maestoso*,

"Believe me very truly yours,

"F. H."

The next fragment refers to the visit paid to the Astley's, at Liverpool, alluded to in the last.

"O! the horrors of the Circus!—the orange-

peel—the cigar smoke, the shouts, screams, hisses, and other playful eccentricities of the pensive public! We sat, *two* of the party at least, with a superb disgust enthroned on our regal brows, and looking most resolutely away *from* the stage. But, now I bethink myself, Cousin, there was a certain tranquil assumption of superiority in your talking of sitting at home quietly, (and *elegantly* doubtless,) which is not to be countenanced.—*Thou, Brutus!* After all the *Rontim Bontims*,* &c. &c. &c. You will please to consider all the above as mere mystification. The evening was delightful—the Clown altogether 'a creature of the elements,'—the

* This note was written soon after the publication of Dr. Bowring's "Specimens of Magyar Poetry"—some of these had amused Mrs. Hemans much, as well as excited her curiosity. In particular, she caught up a dancing song: the first words of this are "*Rontim bontim;*" they are followed by others equally euphonious: hence came her designation of balls.

public might have been an audience of 'gentle readers.' I was enchanted, and my attendant cavalier in a state of beatitude.

"Ever yours, &c., &c.

"F. H."

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* "I am very glad you are returned, my dear ———; I have been wishing for you exceedingly . . . I am receiving the strangest letters every day;—do read the enclosed elegant production and exercise your woman's wit, in discovering whether it comes from Mr., Mrs., or Miss, or any of the *Principesse Perkins*. Not that I think it needs an answer, I mean it 'to have gone down full fathom five.' This morning I was addressed as '*Very* dear Madam,' which certainly has an awful sound with it. I am quite pleased to have some roses in blow which I planted myself in spring; I have destined them for you, but fear the boys will not carry them delicately enough, so I shall keep them

till you come . . . . . .
I had a great deal more to say to you, but this being the first, or last of the month, I scarcely know which, there is a frightful array of *bills* just brought in, and showering upon me,

> 'As if they said, our sole design is
> To suffocate your Royal Highness.'

So I must proceed forthwith to the study of *Lord Bacon.* Tea, coffee, sugar, almonds, raisins, those are all very endurable words—'*very pretty names,*' as one of Mrs. Barbauld's tales says of 'William, George and Harry;'—but *butcher's meat!* 'O! that the too, too solid flesh would melt!'"

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* "My dear ———,

"Notwithstanding your rejection of the Clan-Campbell cloak, I trust you reached home the other night without any penalty for your imprudence. For my own part, I hope I shall soon

be well enough to pay you a visit. I really mean to try if I can take a little more care of myself, (though I *do* think it requires a natural genius for it,) because having no kind brother to nurse me, I have made the brilliant discovery that there is no pleasure at all in being ill alone; indeed it is very desolate: to me so *strangely* desolate, that 'sorrow takes new sadness from surprise;' but I will not speak about such things. I send you an American Annual to look at, which I received a few days ago, and in which you cannot be more surprised to see some *forgeries* of mine on the 'Use of the word Barb,' than I was to see them *there*. It quite perplexed me until I found out that a friend of mine in this neighbourhood had given Professor Norton a copy, which I had almost forgotten, during his visit to Liverpool. *He* has told the story in the prettiest way for me, but to you I shall confess the whole wicked truth. It was neither more nor less than a mystification practised upon ————————, who in the innocence

of his heart, called upon me two or three years ago, and asked me if I could help him to some authorities in the old English writers, for the use of the word *Barb*, as a steed. I promised my assistance, (I believe he had a wager depending upon it,) and actually imposed upon his trusting nature all that sheet of forgeries with which 'the much-enduring man,' enchanted by his sudden acquisition of learning, went about rejoicing, (I really marvel how I had the heart!) until some one-eyed person among the blind awakened him from his state of 'ignorance' and 'bliss.'

"I have been very ill used in several ways since I saw you. Here is a great book on Phrenology, which a gentleman has just sent me and expects that I shall *read!* People really do take me for a sort of literary ogress, I think, or something like the sailor's definition of an epicure, 'a person that can eat *anything*.' To be sure I *did* very much aggravate the Phrenologist lately, by laughing at the whole *Scullery*

science and its votaries, so I suppose this is his revenge. And imagine some of my American friends having actually sent me several copies of a Tract, audaciously calling itself 'A Sermon on Small Sins.' Did you ever know any thing so scurrilous and personal? 'Small sins' *to me*, who am little better than a grown-up Rosamond, (Miss Edgeworth's naughty girl, you know,) who constantly lie in bed till it is too late to get up early, break my needles, (when I use any,) leave my keys among my necklaces, answer all my amusing letters first and leave the others to their fate; in short, regularly commit small sins enough every day, to roll up into one great, immense, *frightful* one at the end of it! Now have I *not* been ill, very ill used, as I said? How very well this swan-quill of mine did write yesterday, and how very badly it is writing now! I hope —— will consider the neatness of the German lines which I beg you to give him, as a proof of its excellence, (now departed,) after he mended it; and I shall be very much obliged if he will be

kind enough to restore it again, and to make me a few more, and I want to know whether he found the Fate-Tragedy as *comfortable* as he wished."

The following are the imitations of our standard authors referred to: now, I believe, published in England for the first time.

The warrior donn'd his well-worn garb,
And proudly waved his crest,
He mounted on his jet-black *barb*,
And put his lance in rest.

Percy's Reliques.

Eftsoons the wight withouten more delay,
Spurred his brown *barb* and rode full swiftly on his way.

Spenser.

Hark! was it not the trumpet's voice I heard?
The soul of battle is awake within me!

The fate of ages and of empires hangs
On this dread hour. Why am I not in arms?
Bring my good lance, caparison my steed!
Base, idle grooms! are ye in league against me?
Haste with my *barb*, or by the holy saints
Ye shall not live to saddle him to-morrow!

Massinger.

No sooner had the pearl-shedding fingers of the young Aurora tremulously unlocked the oriental portals of the golden horizon, than the graceful flower of chivalry, and the bright cynosure of ladies' eyes—he of the dazzling breast-plate and swan-like plume—sprang impatiently from the couch of slumber, and eagerly mounted the noble *barb* presented to him by the Emperor of Aspramontanice.

Sir Philip Sidney's Arcadia.

See'st thou yon chief whose presence seems to rule
The storm of battle! Lo! where'er he moves
Death follows! Carnage sits upon his crest—

Fate on his sword is throned—and his white *barb*,
As a proud courser of Apollo's chariot,
Seems breathing fire.

Potter's Æschylus.

O bonnie looked my ain true knight,
His *barb* so proudly reining,
I watched him till my tearfu' sight
Grew a'maist dim wi' straining.

Border Minstrelsy.

Why, he can heel the lavolt and wind a fiery *barb* as well as any gallant in Christendom. He's the very pink and mirror of accomplishment.

Shakspeare.

Fair star of beauty's heaven! to call thee mine
All other joys I joyously would yield;
My knightly crest, my bounding *barb* resign,
For the poor shepherd's crook and daisied field;

For courts or camps no wish my soul would prove,
So thou wouldst live with me, and be my love.

Earl of Surry's Poems.

For thy dear love my weary soul hath grown
Heedless of youthful sports: I seek no more,
Or joyous dance, or music's thrilling tone,
Or joys that once could charm in minstrel lore,
Or knightly tilt where steel-clad champions meet
Borne on impetuous *barbs* to bleed at beauty's feet.

Milton's Sonnets.

As a warrior clad
In sable arms, like Chaos dull and sad,
But mounted on a *barb*, as white
As the fresh new-born light,
So the black night too soon
Came riding on the bright and silver moon,
Whose radiant, heavenly ark,

Made all the clouds beyond her influence seem
E'en more than doubly dark,
Mourning, all widowed of her glorious beam.

Cowley.

. . . . . "I should have sent you the January number of Blackwood long since, fair *cousin*, (I mean that to be your title in future,) but by some mischance it never reached me. Poor *Ebony* has, as I lately heard in a letter from Cyril Thornton, been dangerously ill, which I suppose is the reason of this irregularity in his proceedings. I must cordially thank you, and all of you, for your very kind interest during my late illness. I am now better than I should have thought it possible to be after so much suffering, though still very disagreeably reminded of my mortality by an unconquered cough and much languor. I shall be delighted to hear the Irish air you mention: I am very fond of Irish music; there breathes through it (or perhaps I imagine

all this) a mingling of exultation and despondence, 'like funeral strains with revelry,' a something unconquerable, yet mournful, which interests me deeply. But I really have nothing, and never shall, I believe, have any thing written in the *pastorale* measure your air seems to require: I must refer you to Shenstone:—

> 'My banks they are furnished with bees,
> Whose murmur invites one to sleep,'

would be very lulling and ——ish; but if it is a deep tone of pathos you want, I suppose nothing less will satisfy you than

> 'I have found out a gift for my fair;'

and I should imagine a great deal of Irish energy—a *fortissimo* expression might be bestowed upon the '*barbarous deed*' with which the verse concludes. My sister has sent me a lovely little song to some very simple words of mine; I think it is more full of feeling than any thing she has ever composed. I will give you

her copy as soon as I have had it transcribed into my own book. I am quite surprised at your liking the 'Storm-Painter' so much; as an expression of strong and perturbed feeling, I could not satisfy myself with it in the least; it seemed all done in pale *water-colours.*" . . . .

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*. . . . . "I had the great satisfaction last night of finding, in a magazine, some poetry which I think would particularly suit *the* Irish air: it is also very much in the style of 'I have found out a gift for my fair,' only more original. Cousin —— will find it in the 'Specimens of Hottentot Poetry' which I send him, and I have no doubt that *his conscience* will immediately point out the lines. If even *these* will not do, then I am afraid the unhappy air must die an old bachelor or an old maid, (I really do not know which it would be correct to say,) as it seems to possess so few facilities for being

'married to immortal verse.' . . . . Have you committed many 'small sins' since I saw you? For my part, I do hope that if the Catholics, as I once heard a Welsh countryman say, 'get to the top of us,' they will not impose a necessity of auricular confession. How should I hate, and by every means in my power, torment and mystify a confessor! Should not you?

"I must conclude as abruptly as an Irish melody, having a great many 'people' to dispose of in various ways.

"Affectionately yours,

"F. H."

CHAPTER VII.

Familiar Correspondence continued — Grillparzer's "Sappho"—German Almanachs—Tieck and Schlegel —Proposed Translations from the German—Anatomy of Hatred — Richter — Escape from sudden death—Dobeneck—Mrs. Hemans' predilections in foreign literature—Mr. Carlyle upon Burns—"Mary Anne's Dream" — Swedish Tradition — Earliest poems—Recovery from illness—"New England's Memorial"—The Moon—"Corinne"—Letters from America—Letter to Miss Mitford.

*"My dear ——,

"I hope you did not,—no, indeed, I rather hope you *did* catch a *little*, a very little cold the other evening, that I may try whether there really *is* that supreme satisfaction in saying 'I

told you so,' which all sympathizing friends appear to find. Never say it was *my* fault if you are amongst 'the afflicted with the gout and rheumatism' this week; I offered you a cloak such as little Red Riding Hood herself might have envied, and you obstinately preferred that silver-paper scarf, and so now you must take the consequence. Now having given you this friendly lecture, I consider myself to have fulfilled my duty admirably, and may proceed to something else. I began life yesterday morning by issuing peremptory orders that no cloaks and pattens . . . . should be admitted on pain of death. I believe an instinctive sense of this awful mandate spread itself through the village, for nobody came: encouraged by which happy result, I mean to send forth the same manifesto every evening for a month, after which time I shall begin to consider myself safe from all people that have 'friendly ways.' . . . . Will you tell —— I regretted, after you and he had left me the other evening, that instead of Werner's 'Luther,' which I do not think will interest him

much, I had not lent him one of my greatest favourites, Grillparzer's 'Sappho;' I therefore send it him now. It is, in my opinion, full of beauty, which I am sure he will appreciate, and of truth, developing itself clearly and *sorrowfully*, (like almost all truth, I believe,) through the colouring mists of imagination. I shall be very happy to see —— on Sunday. I have been practising the necromantic German characters, and shall have a lesson to show him, for which I must bespeak all possible indulgence. Now good-bye, my dear ——; I do wish that I lived nearer to you, and then we might 'talk of virtue till the hour of bed' whenever we liked. This very evening I am sure I could say most edifying things, which it is quite a pity should be lost to the world.

"Affectionately yours,

"F. H."

The pleasantry in the next letter refers to the

strange mistake made by some of the periodicals as to the relationship of two of her friends and favourite writers.

" My dear Sir,

" It really may be considered as no small triumph to have wrung forth a letter from our ' esteemed friend,' William. I had begun to consider him as altogether an allegorical personage, a sort of John Doe or Richard Roe, with whose name Mary found it convenient to protect herself, and I have read the productions *ascribed to him* with much greater interest now that I am thoroughly satisfied of his existence. Your concession that ' every thing that whistles is a ghost,' is certainly most generous, and cannot but be infinitely gratifying to persons of tastes like mine, for whom it so greatly enlarges the bounds and population of the spiritual world. My situation here subjects me to a great deal of whistling in the course of the day, rather more

than I have found quite agreeable after the stillness of my own green valley in Wales. Your suggestion, however, has opened a new field to my imagination, and I shall for the future, listen to 'Cherry Ripe' and 'I've been Roaming,' which I observe are the favourite tunes that 'carmen whistle' here, with sensations of new and indescribable awe.

"I have been much amused with the 'Minerva and Urania,' which I return with many thanks. Matthison's '*Tafeln am wege*,'* in the former are very interesting; but oh! the '*Sieben Kupfern*!'†—after looking at such engravings as those in the Souvenir, how inexpressibly comical do they appear!

"I return the Westminster Review, my dear sir, with many thanks; I gratefully acknowledge your kindness in occasionally selecting for me such things as you know will interest and amuse me, because, from my great distaste for

* Sketches on the Road. † Seven copper plates.

reviews in general, I should otherwise lose much that may be well worth reading. It is their perpetual bitterness, and jealousy, and strife, from which I turn with so much dislike; they remind me constantly of the line 'La haine veille et l'amitié s'endort.' How very different seems the spirit of the literary men in Germany! I am just reading a work of Tieck's, which is dedicated to Schlegel, and I am delighted with the beautiful simplicity of these words in the dedication.

"'*Es war eine schöne zeit meines Lebens, als ich Dich und Deinen Bruder Friederich zuerst kennen lernte: eine noch schönere als wir und Novalis für Kunst und Wissenschaft vereinigt lebten, und uns in mannichfältigen Bestrebungen begegneten. Jetzt hat uns das Schicksal schon seit vielen Jahren getrennt. Ich kann nur im Geist und in der Erinnerung mit dir leben.*' * Is not that union of bright minds,

* That was a fair time of my life, when I first learned to know you and your brother Frederick—a fairer,

'*fur Kunst und Wissenschaft*,' a picture on which it is delightful to repose? . . . .

"When is the German translation to be commenced? I fear your time is more engrossed than ever, but I hope you have not given up the idea in which we used to take so much pleasure: for my own part, I find that the more I can throw my mind into any undertaking which interests my friends, the more I make to myself a place of refuge from personal suffering.

"Ever believe me faithfully yours,

"F. H."

"I have been thinking much of the German scenes for translation, respecting which you paid me the compliment of wishing for my opinion.

when we and Novalis lived united for art and knowledge, and encountered each other in many various efforts. Fate has now separated us for many years. I can now live with you in spirit and memory only.

The interview between Philip the Second and Posa, is certainly very powerful, but to me its interest is always destroyed by a sense of utter *impossibility* which haunts me throughout. Not even Schiller's mighty spells can, I think, win the most 'unquestioning spirit' to suppose that such a voice of truth and freedom *could* have been lifted up, and *endured*, in the presence of the cold, stern Philip the Second—that he would, even for a moment, have listened to the language thus fearlessly bursting from a noble heart. Three of the most impressive scenes towards the close of the play, might, I think, be linked together, leaving out the intervening ones, with much effect;—the one in which Carlos, standing by the body of his friend, forces his father to the contemplation of the dead: the one in which the king comes forward, with his fearful dreamy remorse, alone amidst his court,

'*Gieb diesen Todten mir heraus, &c.*'

and the subsequent interview between Philip

and the grand inquisitor, in which the whole spirit of those fanatic days seem embodied.

"There is a scene in one of Oelenschlaeger's dramas, 'Der Hirtenknabe,'* (you see I am still too distrustful of my power over the *cabalistic* characters to venture upon employing them,) which has always affected me strongly. It has also the recommendation of telling its own tale at once, without need of any preliminaries. An aged priest wishes by degrees, and with tenderness, to reveal to a father the death of his only child. The father, represented as a bold and joyous character, full of hope, and strength, and '*Muth des Lebens*,'† attributes all the 'dark sayings' and mournful allusions of his visitant, to the natural despondency of age, and attempts to cheer him by descriptions of *his* bright domestic happiness. '*Stärke dich*,'‡ he says, '*in meinen sonnen-*

* The Herd boy.

† The joy and hopefulness of life.

‡ Strengthen yourself in my sunshine.

schein!' The very exultation of his spirit makes you tremble for him, and feel that fate is approaching: at last the old man uncovers the body of the child, and then the passionate burst of the father's grief is indeed overpowering:—then the mother enters, and even amidst all her anguish, the meekness of a more subdued and chastened being is felt and beautifully contrasted with her husband's despair. If you do not know the 'Hirtenknabe,' which has never been translated, I should have no difficulty in procuring it for you. In Goëthe's 'Egmont,' the scenes in which Clärchen endeavours to rouse the spirit of the bewildered citizens, and in which Brackenburg communicates to her the preparations for Egmont's execution, seem to *stand out* from the rest in the bold relief of their power and passion; and the interview between Egmont in prison and Ferdinand, the son of his enemy, who soothes even the anguish of those moments, by the free-will offering of his young heart's affection and reverence, I have always thought

most deeply touching. But indeed I am speaking of things in which I am sure your judgment is far clearer than my own, and can only hope you will not allow it to be biassed contrary to your own opinions by any thing I have said.

"As to the *Anatomy of Hatred*, I quite agree with you, (as far as I can enter into the subject,) that the bitterest and most enduring animosities would be likely to spring up from the ruins of old affection, and be rendered keener by all the thoughts of 'benefits forgot.' Do you remember those fine lines of Coleridge's?

'Alas! they had been friends in youth,
But whispering tongues can poison truth,
And constancy lives in realms above,
And life is thorny, and youth is vain,
And to be wroth with what we love,
Doth work like madness in the brain.'

"I suppose that from such agonizing strife the mind will often seek refuge—though it be the shelter of a poison-tree—in apathy and hatred,

and that the last may be perhaps more attainable than the first.

"I am still enjoined close confinement to the house, and can scarcely expect either my boys or myself to make much progress towards recovery during the continuance of this intensely sharp air. As to the advice with which you conclude your letter . . . . I feel that I am not in the least improved since the days when I used to run wild about the mountains, despite all the sage exhortations I received 'to be a good girl and keep my frock clean,' and I really do not know how to reform myself in the matter. What a volume of a letter!—I fear you will think that my pen means to journey like Ahasuerus the wandering Jew—'on—on—on'—for ever and a day:—in proof that such is *not* its murderous intention, I must beg you to believe me, dear sir,

"Ever truly yours,

"F. H."

"I owe you many thanks, my dear sir, for so kindly introducing me to all those noble thoughts of Richter's. I think the vision in the church magnificent both in purpose and conception; it is scarcely possible to stop for the contemplation of occasional extravagances, when borne along so rapidly and triumphantly as by 'a mighty rushing wind,' some of the detached thoughts are so exquisite. What a deep echo gives answer within the mind to the exclamation of the 'immortal old man' at the sound of music. 'Away! away! thou speakest of things which throughout my endless life I have found not, and shall not find!' All who have felt music, must, I think, at times have felt this, making its sweetness too piercing to be sustained. Now let me introduce you to a dear friend of mine, Tieck's Sternbald, in whose '*Wanderungen*'* which I now send,—if you know them not already—I cannot but hope that you will take almost as much delight as I have done amidst my own free

* "Wanderings."

hills and streams, where his favourite book has again and again been my companion.

I have very great pleasure in thinking, that you are now reduced to skating, as the old song says, 'upon dry ground.' After such an escape as yours, how well you must understand the feeling expressed by the line which speaks of 'curdling a long life into one hour'—nay, into one moment, a lightning-moment, such as I should imagine must leave its track upon the mind indelibly graven. And I too feel as if I had been within the shadow of death since I saw you—not that I believed myself to be in any danger, but I suppose it is impossible to be much alone during illness, without thinking often of all that is hidden from us by the veil of life.

"How very surprising is the *intense* life of the mind during some kinds of illness; I could not help often wondering if *any* of the thousand thoughts which swept like April lights and shadows over my spirit, would accompany me

into the world that is unseen. Did you ever observe how strangely sounds and images of waters, rushing torrents, and troubled ocean-waves, are mingled with the visionary distresses of dreams and delirium? To me there is no more perfect emblem of peace than that expressed by the scriptural phrase, 'there shall be no more sea.' My fever is gone, but it has left me oppressed with such a weight of languor, and an unutterable '*Heimweh*,' which I feel as if I could never shake off; *au reste*, I am in a most penitential condition, obliged to wear a shawl and a cap, and to hear good advice, and put on a convinced countenance; all the while thinking grievously of gypseys and Indians and all free creatures that live under the blue sky. I beg you will be pleased to pity me as much as possible and not to marvel at the dulness of this epistle from a person who is in little better than a chrysalis state of existence, and believe me,

"Very truly yours,

"F. H."

"I cannot return the notice of Richter,* which has interested me exceedingly, without thanking you, my dear sir, for your kindness. I am delighted to find that you so much enjoy those stirring songs of 'My Cid,' which, I think, carry us more completely back to the very heart of the proud olden time—the days of the lance—than any other poetry I know. I never met with any one who thoroughly appreciated them before. I beg you will keep them, or any other of my books, as long as they can be found of the least use, and do assure you, that when any of my friends enjoy what has been a source of enjoyment to myself, I feel all the pleasure of a child who has found a companion to play with his flowers.

"Poor Grillparzer, and Klingemann, and Müllner! The crying philosopher himself, in his most lacrymose of moods, *must* have laughed had he read that review. As for Klingemann and Müllner, and their Fate-tragedies, I can see

* In an early number of the *Foreign Quarterly Review.*

them 'hung in chains' without the slightest suffering. Nothing, to be sure, can be more absurd than the 'Twenty-fourth of February' and all its progeny. Only imagine if our 'Post-woman' were to be turned into a Fate-heroine! if the destinies were irresistibly to impel her, on a certain day every month, to open our important dispatches, and read all the letters, and steal the books! But I cannot give up Grillparzer, who seems to me to breathe as different an atmosphere from theirs as the circle of a star (though but one of the fourth or fifth magnitude) from that of a gas-lamp!"

"I have lived very little in that 'world of bright fancies' of which you speak, since I had last the pleasure of seeing you. I have been administering draughts, and superintending embrocations, and I know not what, until I flatter myself that my talents for nursing have received the very highest cultivation. Now, however, I am very much enjoying myself in the society of certain '*Luft und Feuergeister*,' '*Wasser und Wald-*

geister,' and '*Feen und Feld-geister,'** introduced to me by the worthy Herr Dobeneck, in a book of '*Deutschen Volksglauben.*'† These '*Geister*' of his are, to be sure, a little wild and capricious in their modes of proceeding; but even this is a relief after the macadamized mortality with which one has to pass all the days of one's life. I like your superstition about good wishes, and am very much inclined to agree with him who says, '*Es ist alles wahr wodurch du besser wirst*;' ‡ in which kindly faith,

"Believe me, dear Sir,

"Ever truly yours,

"F. H."

"I will beg leave to keep the Foreign Review until next week, when, if the destinies leave the post-woman untempted, you will see it return safely."

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* Spirits of air and fire, water and forests, fairies and field-spirits.

† German popular traditions.

‡ Every thing through which you are bettered is true.

To these may not improperly succeed a few memoranda, which will throw a further light on Mrs. Hemans' peculiar preferences in foreign literature.

"My chief intercourse with Mrs. Hemans," says the writer, to whom the last of the foregoing letters was addressed, "was in the literatures of Spain and Germany—some few works in French, the chief of which I remember to have been the *Messéniennes* of De la Vigne, I had the pleasure of making her acquainted with. Amongst the Spanish authors she admired Herrera, whose ode on the loss of Sebastian she translated, (for the Monthly Magazine, I believe,) and Luis de Leon especially—the '*Noche serena*' of the latter she justly thought one of the most exquisite lyrics ever written. The lyrics in Gil Polo's Diana, and the elegies of Garcilaso, were also great favourites with her. I remember having read to her, at her especial request, Quintana's noble 'Ode to the Sea,' the *sound* of which, in some of the finest passages, used to gratify her

ear greatly. She was never tired of hearing Bürger's Leonore, for the sake of its wonderful rhythm and energy—and I remember how on one very stormy dark evening, I was bid to repeat it from the beginning to the end; to see how far this way of treating the supernatural equalled or surpassed in effect, the more remote terrors of the 'Ancient Mariner,' which we had read the evening previously. She gave the preference in the power of producing awe to the latter; for this accorded with her peculiar turn of mind, which sought the distant and imaginative, rather than the present and material; but I well remember how she startled and shivered at the verse which describes the trampling of the spectre horse at midnight, at Leonore's solitary door, and the shrill whisper of the skeleton at the wicket. The writings of Novalis and of Tieck were very dear to her; and although I do not believe she clearly understood, if, indeed, they are at all intelligible, the vague speculations of the former, still the high tone of contemplation, the feminine

purity, the passion for nature of that young writer, allured her even where she could only follow him in a sort of twilight. One of Tieck's Art-romances 'Sternbald's Wanderings'—she especially loved, and deservedly, for with a little extravagant love of the old German time, there is much beauty and sensibility in the book, although it deals with shadows, and the mind dreams rather than lives in it. I do not think she loved Göethe so well as Schiller; many of the great works of the former, especially the Tasso, I was the first to bring to her notice; but *how* she admired it, her translation and review of the poem afterwards showed. Herder's unrivalled translation of the romances of the Cid she delighted in; and found some pleasure in the poems of A. W. Schlegel, for the sake, I am sure, of a few passages, which accorded with her prevailing views of life. Grillparzer, (especially in the Sappho,) was one of her favourites among the *minor* tragedians, and the dramas of Oehlenschlager she also loved for their pure northern chivalry, and a certain moonlight tenderness in

the passions he depicts, more engaging perhaps to a female than a male reader. The Coreggio, the scene of which is laid wholly out of his northern land, was, however, her chief delight; she found, I am sure, some analogy between the picture here given of the enthusiastic but timid and sensitive painter and of his wounds in fighting with rude practical natures, and what she was wont to regard as her own history. Indeed, as you well know, her delight in any book whatever depended more upon the extent to which it thus corresponded with her peculiar feelings than on its absolute excellence; for even if it were bad, she could fill up the meagreness of its outlines, did it but agree with that she loved to draw with her own many imaginations, for then the author had full credit with her. But though this is true with respect to her reading when I knew her, it cannot have been so at an earlier period: for I have seen among her MSS., as well as constantly observed in her conversation, evidences of a much less exclusive pursuit

of study and reading. I should say that her eagerness for knowledge *on all hands* must have been intense in girlhood, and how much of the stores thus acquired her excellent memory afterwards preserved for the happy and unexpected illustration of one vein of thought, you have had occasion to remark, as well as myself. You cannot insist too strongly on her possession of stores thus derived, which conversation elicited, but which made no adequate appearance in her writings."

The following fragments of correspondence, being unconnected, and, as far as I can ascertain, chiefly referring to the first winter and spring spent by Mrs. Hemans in the neighbourhood of Liverpool, may be here introduced. The first refers to the literary undertaking to which allusion has already been made.

"My dear Sir,

"I have at last been able to procure the 'Hirtenknabe' for you, as I thought you might perhaps like to carry the scene further than I have

done in my transcript, and at all events that the perusal of the whole must interest you. I have had a letter from ———, which *I hope* I do right in sending you to read, because I cannot but think that *his* understanding *you* in any future intercourse you may have, will be much facilitated by *your* thoroughly understanding *him*. It seems to me that 'the line' which he wishes, and expects to see, so 'clearly defined and strongly drawn,' would be most injurious to that spirit of general kindliness and brotherhood which I have always looked upon as the very essence of our religion; and I cannot but differ from him on several other points, though I must both love and respect what I *know* to be depth of feeling and earnestness of conviction.

"I have been delighted with the paper on Burns,* which you were kind enough to lend me: I think that the writer has gone further into the 'heart of the mystery' than any other, because he, almost the first of all, has approached

* The admirable article by Mr. Carlyle, which appeared in the Edinburgh Review.

his subject with a deep reverence for genius, but a still deeper for *truth*; all the rest have seemed only anxious to make good the attack or the defence. And there is a feeling too of 'the still sad music of humanity' throughout, which bears upon the heart a conviction full of power, that it is listening to the voice of a brother. I wonder who the writer is; he certainly gives us a great deal of what Boswell, I think, calls 'bark and steel for the mind.' I, at least, found it in several passages; but I fear that a woman's mind *never* can be able, and never was formed, to attain that power of sufficiency to itself, which seems to lie somewhere or other amongst the *rocks* of a man's."

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* "Here comes the Anniversary, my dear ——, very much ashamed of itself for having been gadding so long; and here are a Spanish exercise book, and history of Spanish Literature, which may, perhaps, assist your brother in his new studies; the former is,

indeed, such a treasury of moral maxims, that I think in some way or other it cannot fail to be edifying, provided he gives it proper attention; and here is 'King Ottocar,' who will, I fear, like other royal personages, be found rather dull; and here is Blackwood, not dull certainly, whatever his other crimes may be, and now I believe my catalogue *raisonné* is finished. . . .

"I have not yet had any inspiration on the subject of '*my nephew*,' but as my eldest brother is in expectation of an heir very shortly, I doubt not that quite a new set of feelings will spring up within me on the occasion, and that I shall then be able to shoot my own soul into the body of an uncle, or rather to imagine an uncle's soul the inhabitant of mine, without any difficulty. . . . . Will you tell ——, I have a manuscript collection of Castilian ballads and Letrillas, the easiest of all Spanish poetry, which I shall be happy to lend him whenever he wishes."

In the next, frequent reference is made to an evening passed at Wavertree; when one of the guests, whose passionate admiration of Shelley embraced the extravagances as well as the beauties of that writer, volunteered to read that singular but almost *insane* poem, "Mary Anne's dream," which he went through "with voice and gesture conformable." It may be here mentioned, in passing, that Mrs. Hemans had long since been won from her early disinclination to enjoy or even admit any of Shelley's dreamy, but most inspired poems, by the elevation of thought they display, even at their wildest, and the exquisite charms of their imagery and versification. Her mind was as certainly accessible by the former, as her fancy and her ear were open to the enchantment of the latter: one of his lyrics which she loved best, was the ode to the "Westi Wnd."

"I fear you were very unwell the other evening; or did you run away so early to escape the infliction of another '*Dream?*' I was quite afraid of looking at you, lest I should have laughed. Pray let me know by *our post* this evening how you are. . . . . I send you the Moravian air, and this is the old Swedish tradition of which I was speaking to you last night when the public entered and interrupted me. There is a dark lake somewhere among the Swedish mountains, and in the lake there is an island of pines, and on the island an old castle, and there is a spirit-keeper, who lives far down in the lake, and when any evil is going to befall the inhabitants of the castle, he rises to the surface, and plays a most mournful ditty on his shadowy harp, and they know that it is a music of warning; I met with it in Olaus Magnus, such a strange wild book! Did you ever read it?

"I hope you will not fail to come when your sister visits me next week, and I will not

have any one here but our own most agreeable selves.

"Ever very truly yours,

"F. H."

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* "My dear ———,

"After you were gone, I tore the *dead* note which I had previously written you. It had quite evaporated, and I could not think of sending it. I have yet only been able to find one of the letters I mentioned to you, Dr. Channing's; but I hope the others will be forthcoming. I think there are some beautiful thoughts in this. I send 'Hope Leslie,' and the little set of poems,* which, when you read, pray remember that most of them were written before I consider my mind and feelings quite to have awakened—had they slept on, perhaps it would have been happier for me. The German book is for Mr.

* Her earliest poems.

———. I am very much tired, very stupid, and as cross as is consistent with the *pleasure of convalescence*; so good-bye."

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*"I am sure you will be glad to hear, my dear ———, that I was not at all worse for the flight out of doors I took with you, though I have not since been able to repeat it, on account of this sharp air, which affects my breathing. I bear being long shut up in the house about as ill as a gipsy or an Arab would. Did it ever strike you how much lighter sorrows' 'pining cares' become, out in the free air, and under the blue sky, than 'beneath a smoky roof,' as the sea-kings of old used to say? For my part, I am never the least surprised to hear of people becoming fascinated with Indian life, and giving up all our boasted refinements for the range of the tameless forests. This reminds me of some American books, which I send you; one of them, 'New England's Memorial,' I have not the

slightest expectation of your reading, and merely wish to call your attention to the beautiful map at the beginning, with all those gallant ships and groups of armed men, and wolves and bears wandering about, to express, I suppose, the dangers which the pilgrim fathers so bravely encountered.* The other, 'Madame Riedesel's Memoirs,' I send for Mrs. ——, whom I think it will interest; the heroine goes through many trials, but sustained as she is by 'the strong affection which overcometh all things,' who can look upon her with *pity?* I wish you would fix an evening to come here with your

* The quaint old book referred to, with its illustrations scarcely less graphic than the mystic and impressive figures which still keep their firm place upon a pack of cards, in spite of the modern taste for innovation, had been sent from America to Mrs. Hemans, from its reference to the subject of her spirited and high-toned ballad, "The Landing of the Pilgrim Fathers," which, as might be expected, is a particular favourite in the United States.

brothers. I am afraid you can hardly be spared for a day yet. I believe *a moon* was the requisite you mentioned, when I last spoke of your coming; and I am sure there *is* a moon, for she looks in at my window every night, and keeps me awake with her cold bright eyes, which, I scarcely know why, always seem to speak of the past. . . . . With my kindest regards to all round your fire-side, believe me,

"Ever affectionately yours,

"F. H."

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* "I have been out to walk a little to-day, the first time after my illness; do not you think one's first interview with the sunshine, after a long separation, is, (like the meetings from which one has expected much,) rather oppressive than delightful? At least, I have found it so; I did not think the sun appeared to sympathize with my languid state nearly as much as he ought to have done, and notwithstanding

all his glaring in my eyes, he very thoughtlessly let the wind feel cold to me; so I came in exceedingly tired, and rather displeased with the outer world than otherwise. I return the books your brothers were so kind as to lend me, with many thanks; I should have sent back 'Yamoyden,' but my little Hal has taken a fancy to read it, therefore I will beg to keep it till next week.

"Ever affectionately yours,

"F. H."

". . . . . You paid me the compliment yesterday evening, of saying that you remembered things which I said longer than I did myself; pray do not extend the distinction to all the personalities which I must have uttered during those few hours. I rather think I was in the most capricious of moods, and that if I could have summoned the wings I so often wish, they would have been of a thousand and

one colours. The reason, I believe, was, that choosing to have a little solitude to complain of, I had not thought proper to see any one for three days, so you were the first recipient of all the strange fancies and feelings which had been floating around me during that long time. Well, I will be very good and gentle on Tuesday evening, and try to realize the title of a book once inflicted upon my juvenile days by the heads of the family, and called 'The Exemplary Matron:'—a 'wearifu' woman,' I then thought the good lady was, but now I believe she would be a very suitable model for me. In which good faith, (I am afraid it will be truly faith, not works,)

"Believe me ever yours,

"F. H."

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* "My dear ——,

"I send the first volume of the 'Républiques Italiennes', for you and my cousin ——, and

also the book with the 'dernier chant de Corinne,' that you may compare it with the poem in the 'New Monthly;' you will see that all the beauty and loftiness of the thoughts belong to Madame de Staël. That book, in particular towards its close, has a power over me which is quite indescribable; some passages seem to give me back my own thoughts and feelings, my whole inner being, with a mirror, more true than ever friend could hold up.*

* In Mrs. Hemans' own copy of "Corinne," the following passage was marked with particular emphasis, and the words "*C'est moi.*"

"De toutes mes facultés la plus puissante est la faculté de souffrir. Je suis née pour le bonheur, mon caractère est confiant, mon imagination est animée; mais la peine excite en moi je ne sais quelle impétuosité qui peut troubler ma raison, ou me donner de la mort. Je vous le répète encore, ménagez-moi; la gaieté, la mobilité ne me servent qu'en apparence: mais il y a dans mon âme des abîmes de tristesse dont je ne pouvais me défendre qu'en me préservant de l'amour."

Corinne, vol. i.

"I think I must have been *fey*, as the Scotch call it, last night at your house. I was in such strange wild spirits, I felt as if I could have taken wings to the stars. I believe it is an evil omen, for I have little cause to be light of heart. . . . . .

"Believe me your affectionate

"FELICIA."

"Will you give the note and music to my cousin, and the German book to my 'Indignation?'"

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*. . . . "You shall fix your own day for coming to me. . . . I being under the ban of the medical empire, and not able to go out at all, am perfectly disengaged, and only fear that you will find me congealed into a state of utter stupidity, after conjugating the verb *s'ennuyer* so long. Those deceitful lines to Fanny!* I ima-

* By an American poet; I believe, Mr. Halleck.

gined they were something very graceful and tender, until the writer broke through all the web he had woven by his provoking *refrain*. I send you a letter from my American friend Mr. Norton, in which I think you will be interested by some of his thoughts on a burial at sea, and by his account of Abbotsford. It seems very long since I have seen you. I am quite tired of this Wavertree, it is so far from every thing I wish. Do you know, all my friends think I have caught the hooping-cough from my boys, though I had it in a proper respectable manner at twelve years old; to be so favoured twice is certainly a distinction accorded to few; and if they are right in their conjecture, it is, I really think, the most memorable incident of my life. How do you bear this 'bitter sky?' It is very dismal to live in a *world without flowers*. I have not seen even a periwinkle or a Christmas rose this month. The boys are not making any progress towards recovery; indeed I scarcely expect

it yet. Pray are you sensible of any improvement in my hand or style of writing? I have just had a most elegant pen presented to me, all twisted round with red silk, and bearing my name in Venetian beads, with a garniture of laurel and forget-me-not; and I really think such an implement ought to produce only '*paroles d'or et de soie.*' What a very voluminous post to-day! All human things, however, must come to an end, therefore believe me,

"Ever affectionately yours,

"F. H."

"Wavertree, near Liverpool, April 3rd.

"My dear Miss Mitford,

"Some friends of mine, the editors of ———, are anxious to know whether you received a letter from them some time since with a sketch which they hoped you might be prevailed upon to illustrate; and I hope so too, for I am much interested in the work, from regard to the family

by whom it has been undertaken; and if I were near you, I should certainly 'coax or 'tice you,' (as an old gardener of ours used to say of me in my childhood, that 'Miss Felicia *'ticed* him to do whatever she pleased,') to comply with our request. I know I wish I could 'tice you here for a little while, though 'our village' is so utterly *unrural* a scene, that I should be rather at a loss to find a pretty walk; and, certainly, of our losing ourselves in such a lovely wood as you have somewhere described, there would not be the least chance. I have had in my possession for some time a great folio sheet of enthusiasm, addressed to you by a gentleman of this neighbourhood. . . . . Unfortunately, I cannot get his ecstasies (excited by the performance of Rienzi) within the limits of any frank that ever was or will be—I mean any *member's* frank. I must try my interest with the Quarter-Master-General, or the Chief Commissioner of Excise, or some other such potentate, under whose *chaperonage* you may possibly have this 'immea-

surably-spread' effusion some day laid at your feet. I hope the dear papa is well, and able to attend your rambles as usual, and that your mother has not suffered from this very trying winter. Believe me,

"Ever truly yours,

"FELICIA HEMANS."

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